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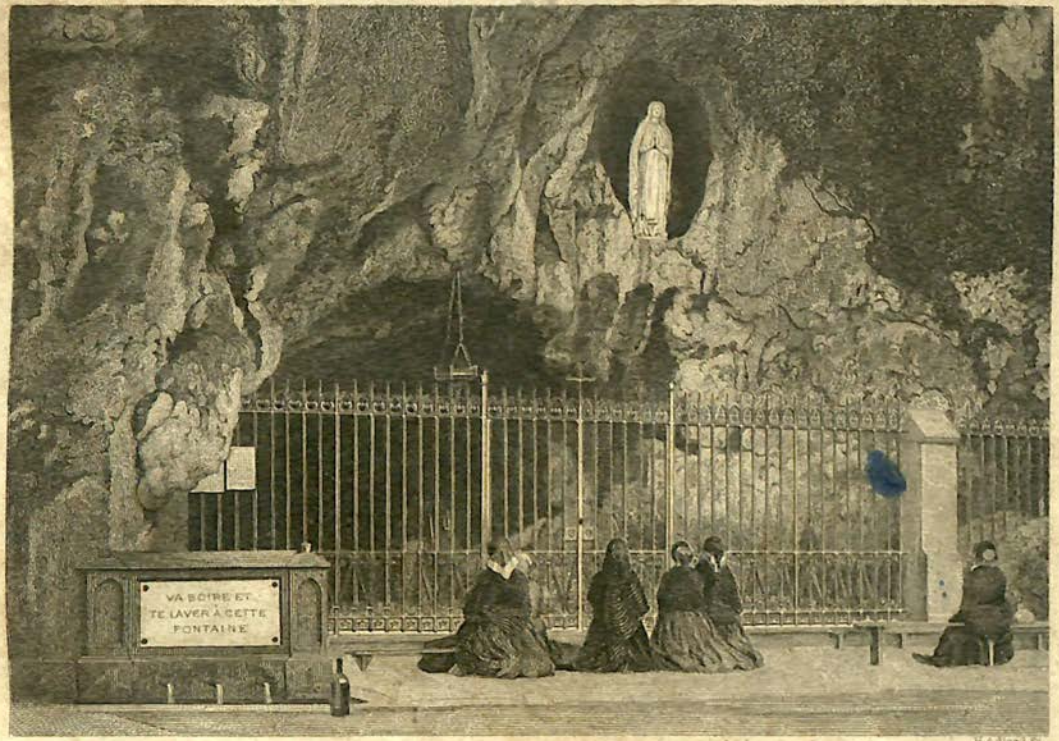
PILGRIMAGES

IN THE

PYRENEES AND LANDES.

'Vado in terram visionis.'—GEN. xxii. 2.

'On a beaucoup écrit sur les Pyrénées; le poète les a chantées; l'écrivain en a raconté les merveilles; le savant en a exploré les curiosités, les richesses et les secrets. Nos vallées, moins heureuses que les vallées de la Suisse, n'ont pas eu encore un historien catholique qui sût faire ressortir avec autant de dévotion que de génie le charme de ses souvenirs religieux, et rendre intéressantes les annales de la Chapelle consacrée à la Vierge; la vieille chronique de la vieille foi des montagnards; enfin, la légende d'autrefois, naïve mais touchante peinture d'une piété simple et profonde.'—DE LAGRÈZE, *Les Pèlerinages des Pyrénées.*



OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

London: Longmans & Co.

PILGRIMAGES

IN THE

PYRENEES AND LANDES.

BY

DENYS SHYNE LAWLOR, ESQ.

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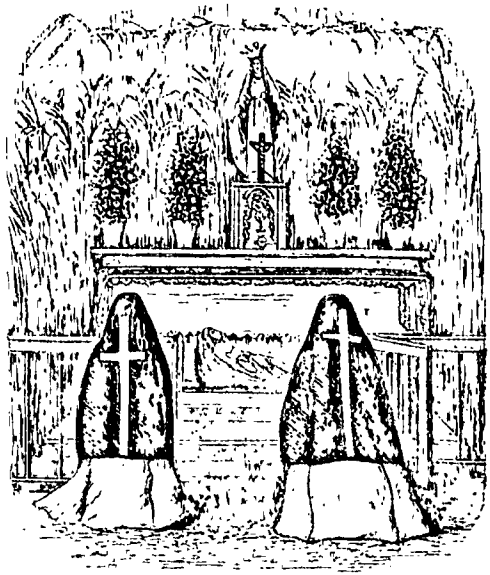

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1870.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

TO

MRS. O'CONNELL,

DARRYNANE ABBEY, COUNTY KERRY.

I CANNOT send forth this volume under auspices more agreeable to my heart than its dedication to you, my beloved daughter. Although written in France, much of it was transcribed under the roof of your accomplished husband, the true-hearted representative of the illustrious 'Liberator,' at 'wild Darrynane,' where, in the piety and purity of your life, you daily renew the grand Catholic traditions of your historic residence. You will appreciate with me the glories of Her whom both of us venerate, and whose power this book celebrates; and I permit myself to hope that, when I long shall have passed away, this page may survive to speak to your children and to recall to yourself the memory and the love of your Father.

LONDON: *January* 1, 1870.

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INTRODUCTION.

'Je n'ai point la prétention de m'adresser à des savants, à des esprits-forts; ceux-là se contenteront de sourire; je parle à ceux qui croient et qui aiment.'

Baron d'Agos.

In the autumn of 1867 I was visited by the greatest affliction by which the Almighty can darken life—the loss of one who during long years had been the light and honour of my existence. Accompanied by my daughter, I sought distraction in our bereavement on the Continent, and certain associations led me to select Biarritz for our retreat. Its pleasant climate, its great tranquillity during the winter season, and the society of a gifted and pious friend, contributed to render my sojourn there both useful and agreeable.

When I left England, I had not yet heard of Our Lady of Lourdes nor of the marvellous occurrences connected with her apparition, with the fame of which that part of the south of France was reverberating. A Catholic connexion of mine had just returned from a visit to Lourdes, which is at five hours' distance by railway from Biarritz; and, overflowing with faith and astonishment at all that he had seen and heard during his pilgrimage, he communicated to me his own feelings of curiosity and devotion. He placed in my hands the book of the Abbé Fourcade,* and, on its perusal, my heart glowed with desire to witness

* *L'Apparition à la grotte de Lourdes en* 1858, par M. l'abbé Fourcade.

and myself investigate the wonderful incidents which it recounts. Especial circumstances had procured for me, at an early period of my residence at Biarritz, the acquaintance of the Abbé Céstac, the celebrated founder of the 'Refuge.' At our various interviews, the constant theme of his conversation was the blessed Virgin, her power with God, and her love for mankind. My intercourse with this remarkable man strengthened in my heart that attachment to Mary which I had learned from my mother's lips, and which is so natural to every Irish Catholic; and often, as I wandered along those pleasant sands and gazed in rapture upon the bounding waves that tumbled in foaming spray at my feet, and my soul rose up in worship of the great Creator, who said, 'Let there be a firmament made against the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters,' it occurred to me that I might do a work not unpleasing to Him, in celebrating the power and goodness of his blessed Mother, with whose apparition and miracles, in a neighbouring diocese, I recently had become conversant.

I mentioned my idea to an enlightened Irish Jesuit, who had come to renew in that invigorating atmosphere a life which labour and sacrifice had brought almost to a premature termination. He approved my design, and offered to write the preface when the undertaking should be completed. But, alas! he is no longer on earth to illuminate my work by his holy intelligence; and I must now send it forth deprived of an introduction which would have been adequate to the subject, and ensured the success of the book. I trust, however, that his inspiration sometimes has been felt by me, as he looked down from his place in Paradise on the progress of a project which he had so warmly encouraged. The Abbé Combalot, in the preface to his admirable work, 'Le Culte de la B. Vierge Marie, Mère de

Dieu,' writes: 'Convinced that the Church of Jesus Christ in our days is passing through the most difficult crisis and the most terrible trials that she has experienced since she has entered upon the path of centuries, I feel that every priest who has the honour to ascend the altar should make it a sacred duty to extend and confirm in men's souls lively, trustful, filial devotion towards the ever-blessed Mother of God.' This sentiment may be allowed to inspire the layman in his study not less than the preacher in the pulpit: it has animated me in the work that I now offer to the public.

A short time after I had matured my project, I saw advertised a book by the Reverend Dr. Spencer Northcote, having for its title, 'Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna.' I knew his ability as a writer, his erudition and discrimination as a priest, and I became nervous lest I should find that the field which I had selected had been cultivated by his experienced hand. But when I read his very interesting work, I was relieved to see that he had not entered the sanctuaries which I was about to unveil to English pilgrims; and that, although he had devoted an elaborate and conclusive chapter to Notre-Dame de la Salette, he was silent upon the more recent mysteries of Notre-Dame de Lourdes. His book became rather an encouragement than an obstacle to mine; and I resolved timidly to grope, like a little child, upon a road on which he has boldly travelled with the energy of a full-grown man. On my first visit to Lourdes, I accidentally saw in the window of a bookseller the work of M. Bascle de Lagrèze, 'Pèlerinages des Pyrénées.' It was my first knowledge of such a work, which, apparently, was the very thing that I wanted. I perused it with avidity; and it became the basis and itinerary of my intended pilgrimages. I have not failed to make acknowledgment in

the various places where I have been indebted to its laborious and accurate pages. I must further express my obligation for the hospitality and sympathy with which he responded to my personal enquiries, and the cordiality with which he placed at my disposal his valuable library and his still more valuable conversation. I shall often think with grateful recollection of our pleasant discussions over that ample hearth in his inner study, strewed with manuscripts, and consecrated by weary vigils and lifelong labours.

I know that I present to the English reader a work very different from the popular literature of the day, and that I deal in subjects which will seem exploded to the generality of critics; but I also know that there is a public in England, in America, and upon the Continent, by which the narratives in this book will be received with interest and gratification. I recount a most wonderful succession of apparitions and miracles connected with the devotion to the blessed Virgin, for upwards of a thousand years, in the south-western districts of France. The legends that I narrate have been gathered and authenticated upon the spot; they have been treasured in the belief of the country during long generations; they have been supported by an extraordinary series of supernatural events; and their influence for good may be traced in the superior moral and religious character of the peoples among whom they have taken place. There is a certain similarity remarkable in these legends, whether they relate to the discovery of a statue or the alleged apparition of the Virgin, that will not fail to impress most readers with the idea that they express a common sentiment; while there is also a diversity and individuality about them which stamps each one with its own peculiar claim to credit, and takes it out of the category of an idle tale or a superstitious

fabrication. The legends connected with certain places where the blessed Virgin is believed to have manifested herself or with the discovery of certain statues, under circumstances of a supernatural or extraordinary character, sometimes may be quaint and incomprehensible to philosophical intelligence; but that cannot affect the devotion of which they are the emanation, nor detract from the veneration of the Mother of God which belongs to the origin and essence of Christianity itself.

St. John of the Cross, in his 'Ascent of Mount Carmel,' writes: 'God, for the greater purification of this devotion, when He grants graces and works miracles, does so generally through images not very artistically adorned; so that the faithful may attribute nothing to the skill of the artist. And very often our Lord grants his graces by means of images in remote and solitary places: in *remote* places, that the pilgrimage to them may stir up our devotion and make it more intense; and in *solitary* places, that we may retire from the noise and concourse of men to pray in solitude, like our Lord himself.' The universality and depths of this sentiment are made evident by the numerous pilgrimages by which the faithful love to honour the spots where Mary is believed to have appeared; and it cannot be denied that a pilgrimage performed in a religious spirit may be eminently conducive to penitential fervour and Christian progress. The following pages bear ample testimony to this fact, as well as to the energy and piety with which the ancient spirit of pilgrimage has been revived throughout the most civilised nation in the world. I can only hope that some may be induced by this narrative to visit these places, and judge of those high and holy influences which I inadequately describe.

Although I have visited the principal sanctuaries in the south-west of France, I have been obliged to neglect a

few, in the hope of returning to them on some future opportunity; such as Notre-Dame de Piétat, near Tarbes; Notre-Dame d'Arcachon, among the pines; and Notre-Dame de Maylis, or Our Lady of the Lily, in the diocese of Aire. Previous to the Revolution, there existed no less than thirty-seven shrines of Our Lady in the districts of Bigorre and Comminges. Several of these are still frequented, and all retain, more or less, their former influence upon the people of their immediate neighbourhood. A list of these may be seen in the preface to the account of Our Lady of Nestes, by the pious and amiable Baron d'Agos. My pilgrimages have not been, like those of M. de Lagrèze, confined solely to the sanctuaries of our Lady. I have trodden the time-worn floor of St. Savin, St. Aventin, St. Bertrand de Comminges, and St. Vincent of Paul; and I feel that, in following me to those ancient shrines, my fellow-pilgrims will not consider that their time has been wasted or their intelligence abused.

A leading publisher in Dublin told me that such a work as this would not be likely to command a sale in Ireland; and the first publisher in London said to me that I must not expect to find readers amongst Protestants. I regret to think that so little is bought or read in Ireland upon any subject that does not belong to the inflammatory and dangerous school in politics and poetry, or to the doubtful records of times that it were wiser to forget. But I also think that there are minds in that country who appreciate more thoughtful studies, sufficiently numerous to satisfy the purpose of a modest author, although perhaps not enough to gratify the greed of a speculative publisher. There is a school among Protestants in England to which any illustration of devotion to the blessed Virgin will be acceptable. They seek in every direction for information and light; they read with pious earnestness and curiosity,

and I allow myself to hope that to this large and increasing class this book may not be without compensating attraction. At all events, while unfolding the legends of the Madonna in the valleys of the Pyrenees and the plains of the Landes, I have been careful not to drop a word which might jar upon the feelings or prejudices of any denomination of Christians; and if anything hurtful has escaped me unperceived, I hope it may not either wound or irritate.

As a layman, addressing myself to general readers, I do not undertake to explain or vindicate the Catholic doctrine of the worship of the blessed Virgin. That has been done by so many able pens competent to the task, and by none more so than by that of Dr. J. S. Northcote, in his lectures entitled 'Mary in the Gospels,' that it would be an unwise presumption on my part to attempt it. I would fain, however, refer my readers to the preface to that erudite and comprehensive work, 'Notre-Dame de France,'* where they will find a clear and comprehensive exposition of the doctrine professed by Catholics on this subject, and of the principle which has inspired and directed pilgrimages throughout all ages and countries of Christianity. In succinct declaration of my own belief, as well as of that of the Church, I will borrow the language of that distinguished theologian Dr. Henry Newman, who has been aptly designated as 'the most illustrious of the many clergymen converted from the Church of England.'

'He (Jesus Christ) alone has an entrance into our soul, reads our secret thoughts, speaks to our hearts, applies to us spiritual pardon and strength. On Him we solely depend. He alone is our inward life. He not only rege-

* *Notre-Dame de France; ou l'Histoire du Culte de la Sainte Vierge en France, depuis l'origine du Christianisme jusqu'à nos jours.* Par M. le Curé de St.-Sulpice (en six volumes).

nerates us, but, to allude to a higher mystery, *semper gignit.* He is ever renewing our new birth and our heavenly sonship. In this sense He may be called, as in nature so in grace, our real Father. Mary is only our adopted Mother, given us from the Cross; her presence is above, not on earth; her office is external, not within us. Her name is not heard in the administration of the sacraments. Her work is not one of ministration towards us. Her power is indirect. It is her prayers that avail, and they are effectual by the *fiat* of Him who is our all in all. Nor does she hear us by any innate power, or any natural gift; but by his manifestation to Her of the prayers which we make to Her. When Moses was on the Mount, the Almighty told him of the idolatry of his people at the foot of it, in order that he might intercede for them; and thus it is the Divine presence which is the intermediating power by which we reach Her and she reaches us.'*

Like all other sacred things in France, the sanctuaries of our Lady were prostrated and public devotion in her honour proscribed during the progress of the Revolution of '93. The evil effects of those disastrous days were felt for long subsequent years; but, within the last thirty years, the revival in France of the old devotion has been as remarkable as it has been wide-spread. During the expedition to the Crimea, the banner of our Lady floated at the mast-head; and on the return of the victorious army, the wealth of the State was employed in converting the cannon captured at Sebastopol into a colossal statue of the Mother of God, truly 'Notre-Dame des Victoires.' This statue has been placed upon the most elevated point of the empire, not being a mountain, the *rocher Corneille*, near

* *Letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey*, D.D., p. 89. (1866.)

the Cathedral of Puy-le-Velay; proclaiming to the world the faith and confidence of this most Catholic nation.

This work abounds in the record of various miracles worked at those sanctuaries through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, or at the tombs and through the relics of certain saints. It does not become me to enter into a disquisition upon such grave matters. Although they do not belong to the scriptural nor yet to the ecclesiastical miracles, I may claim for them that respect which is due to the belief of the clergy and people, and to the uncontradicted testimony of tradition and science. The accomplished and patriotic authoress of the 'Life of St. Patrick,' now in progress of publication, writes:—'The Protestant Church, since the Reformation until the present century, has accepted the miracles of Scripture, while denying the miracles of the Catholic Church. To deny these miracles was a necessity at the time of the Reformation, or how could the reformers consistently separate themselves from a Church which had received its faith from Christ himself, and by the power of Christ continued even to that very day to confirm its teaching by the constant occurrence of miracles? * * * A good Catholic will not doubt rashly nor easily question the miracles which the Church has accepted as proved; neither will he believe rashly any account of a miracle until it has been thoroughly investigated. It should be remembered that even the miracles of Christ were disbelieved by some of those who actually witnessed them. How, then, can the disciple expect more consideration than the Master?' *

Dr. Newman observes, in his 'Essay on Ecclesiastical Miracles':—'An alleged miracle is not untrue because it is unproved, nor is it excluded from our faith because it is

* *Life of St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland*, pp. 18, 25. By M. F. Cusack. National Publication Office, Kenmare, Co. Kerry, 1869.

not admitted into our controversy. Some are for our conviction, and these we are to "confess with the mouth," as well as "believe with the heart." Others are for our comfort and encouragement, and these we are to "keep, and ponder them in our heart," without urging them on unwilling ears.' And again: 'There are two providential systems in operation among us, the visible and invisible, intersecting, as it were, each other, and having a certain territory in common; and in many cases we do not know the minute details of those facts which are ascribed by their reporters to a miraculous agency. For instance, faith may sometimes be a natural principle of recovery from sickness, sometimes a miraculous instrument. The application of oil may be a mere expedient of medical art, or parallel to the supernatural effects of baptism. * * * In these and numberless instances men will systematise facts in their own way, according to their knowledge, opinions, and wishes, as they are used to do in all matters which come before them; and they will refer them to causes which they see or believe, in spite of their being referable to other causes about which they are ignorant or sceptical.'*

Although my chief object in this work has been the legendary and religious history of the Western Pyrenees and the Landes, I have not abstained altogether from description of scenery, manners, and physical peculiarities; and occasionally I have been induced into such rapid sketches of spots in the vicinity of particular pilgrimages as my vivid impressions of their grandeur or beauty rendered irrepressible. Furthermore, I have been tempted to stray now and again into an account of certain exceptional customs in some of these valleys, such as those of

* *Essay on the Miracles recorded in the Ecclesiastical History of the Early Ages*, pp. 74, 106. By John Henry Newman, D.D. Oxford, 1843.

Azun, Larboust, and the Landes, which, I trust, may not be without interest for my readers, and may direct the summer tourist to explore more fully than I have been able to do this picturesque and fascinating country.

I have expressed my obligation to the courtesy and intelligence of all persons with whom my enquiries have made me acquainted in the proper place. I desire now to do so collectively, and to add how much I have been edified by the piety and demeanour, as well as by the acquirements and zeal, of the lower clergy, throughout the dioceses of Tarbes and Bayonne. I could not say anything that could enhance the estimation in which the illustrious prelates of those dioceses are held, not alone by their own flocks, but by the entire Church of France. It will be seen that I have availed myself largely of the elaborate and conscientious work of M. Henri Lasserre on the apparition and miracles of our Lady of Lourdes, for which I have made repeated acknowledgment. I do not know in the whole range of modern Catholic literature any work that exceeds 'Notre-Dame de Lourdes' in eloquence of description, accuracy of detail, accumulation of proof, force of reasoning, and earnestness of conviction. I say much when I presume to say that this book is not unworthy of the greatness of its subject. No honest-minded person can peruse it carefully, and refuse to believe that the blessed Virgin did personally appear at the grotto of Massabielle to Bernadette Soubirous, and that she confirmed her apparition by numerous miracles. I rejoice to be the first to place a full abstract of these occurrences before the English public, while I strongly recommend them to read the entire account in the book itself.*

* While my chapter on our Lady of Lourdes was passing through the press, there appeared in the *Month* for November a graceful article on the subject, entitled, 'Rise of a new Shrine,' which has taken from me the privilege of being the first to introduce its history to English readers.

I find that at page 219 I have made a mistake, which has some importance, in my translation of the account given by St. Jerome of St. Exupère. Inasmuch as it differs in an essential particular from that given by Dr. Northcote, in his captivating and learned work, 'Roma Sotterranea,' I wish to substitute his version for mine. He is treating of an ornament, which is twice repeated in one of the most ancient *cubicula* in the crypts of St. Laurence, and writes: 'De Rossi produces a text from St. Jerome, of which he says he was irresistibly reminded as soon as he saw this painting. St. Jerome is speaking of St. Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, who had spent all his substance for the relief of the poor, and he goes on to remark that 'nothing, however, can be richer than one who carries the Body of Christ in a basket made of twigs, and the Blood of Christ in a chalice of glass.'* In the French text from which I have translated, the words signify 'an osier basket and *an earthen cup*;' that of Dr. Northcote from the original, no doubt, is the most correct.

It was my misfortune in my early youth to publish a poem, of which a friendly critic wrote to me: 'With all my benignant interpretation and all my partiality for the writer, I cannot conceal from myself the large and disproportionate admixture of strong passion, languishing sentiment, voluptuous description, and fierce and menacing politics which pervade your poem. These qualities predominate, I am of opinion, in your book more than in any given quantity of Scott, Moore, or Campbell. I leave out Byron, because him we unmercifully castigate.' The kind hand that penned this criticism has long since mouldered

* *Roma Sotterranea; or some account of the Roman Catacombs—especially of the Cemetery of San Callisto*, p. 224. By Rev. J. Spencer Northcote, D.D., and Rev. W. R. Brownlow, M.A. (1869.)

in the dust, or its pulses would throb with satisfaction at the avowal that, among other motives, in atonement for that poem I publish this volume. Bidding it 'God speed,' and hoping for generous reviewers and sympathising readers, I enter with them into the land of visions—'Vado in terram visionis.'

GRENAGH, KILLARNEY:
August 15, 1869.

OUR LADY OF BÉTHARRAM.

OUR LADY OF BÉTHARRAM.

Nousté-Damé deü cap deü poun,
Adyudat-mé à d'aquest'hore.

Notre-Dame du bout du pont,
Venez à mon aide à cette heure.
La Capère de Bétharram.

I COMMENCE my chronicle of the Pyrenean shrines at Bétharram, 'the devout Chapel;' because, with the exception of Sarrance, it is the first in antiquity, and because it is the first at which I have had the privilege to bend my pilgrim knee. Moreover, our blessed Lady is venerated here as much in her sorrows as in her joys; she stands here, as it were, at the foot of Calvary, and if affliction has been familiar to the heart of the wayfarer, here her humble client may pursue with her the 'way of the Cross,' and weep at Golgotha before he rejoices at Jerusalem. 'Bétharram,' writes one of its historians, the Abbé Rossigneux, 'may be regarded as the star of the Pyrenees; the Chapel and Calvary, venerated and frequented by the inhabitants of Bearn, the Basque country, Bigorre, Gascony, and Languedoc, have been celebrated by the pen of the historian and the lay of the poet; and until eclipsed by the more recent glories of LOURDES, it was the sanctuary in Bearn the most renowned in modern times.

Bétharram is situated at twenty-five kilomètres, or about fifteen miles, from Pau, on the road which leads to Bagnères, Cauterets, Barèges, and St. Sauveur, and

which runs along the banks of the river, the Gave* of Pau, up to its double source, the lake of Gaube, and the cirque of Gavarnie. The country through which the line of railroad passes from Pau is pleasant and fertile; at one side, low hills, covered with wood and interspersed with numerous villages and cheerful homesteads; at the other, trellised vineyards and fields of maize, and in the diminishing distance the majestic Pyrenees. It passes the town of Nay, whose inhabitants at all times have been faithful votaries of Bétharram, and further on it touches Coarraze, where still exist the ruins of the castle in which Henry IV. spent his childhood. The railroad runs close to the Gave, a foaming, dashing, picturesque stream, which, at the period of my visit, was grandly swollen by the dissolving snows.

There was a fierce sun abroad; and when, on the afternoon of May 23, I left the train at the platform of the station of Montaut-Bétharram, I felt much relief in gazing upon the sublime scenery that presented itself to me. The mountains seemed to encircle the spot with a wall of verdant grandeur; but one looked in vain for the church and monastery, which cannot be distinctly seen until one draws up in front of them. The road from the station runs in a straight line to the bridge, opposite which, incrusted in the mountains, are the monastery and church of Notre-Dame de Bétharram. They form an imposing line of building: on the right is a handsome college for the education of young men, secular and ecclesiastical; above and behind these buildings rises the thickly-wooded hill, on the summit of which stands the Calvary, to which I have alluded. Father Poiré† tells us, that it is piously said that when the rapid Gave approaches the 'devout Chapel,' it relaxes its impetuosity and becomes gentle and tranquil, as if to render homage to the meekness of Her

* *Gave* signifies in patois stream or river, and is used generally in the Pyrenees for every river, such as the Gave de Pau, the Gave d'Ossau, and so on.

† *La triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, p. 277.

whose name is there honoured. A more picturesque object than the old bridge, built in 1687, cannot be described; the greenest ivy droops in graceful festoons about its ancient arch, while beneath it blooms, in glowing beauty, a lovely parterre of perennial roses. The aspect from the village of the church and monastery, bathed by that glittering river and hallowed by the shadow of the cross, renders Bétharram attractive to the Christian artist, who seeks his inspiration in the Creator's noblest work, no less than to the lowly pilgrim, who finds his consolation and support at the foot of the cross.

Bétharram is close to the village of Lestelle, where there are two excellent hotels. One of them, 'La Poste,' is situated near the river, with a quiet old balcony shaded and smothered by acacias and other perfumed foliage, under whose shadow it is pleasant to sit and meditate. I rose at five o'clock to hear Mass; there was a large crowd of people waiting until the door of the church was opened, telling their beads or in holy recollection. They all joined in the service, uniting their voices with that of the celebrant, as is the pious custom in this country. An eloquent sermon was preached in Béarnais on devotion to our Lady; of which, the preacher said, the best exhibition is in the modesty, recollection, and sobriety of our lives—a point of view upon which he dwelt with much force and animation.

At half-past seven o'clock, there arrived from the neighbouring town of NAY one of those pilgrimages which are frequent at all seasons, but most especially during the Marian month of May. It consisted of more than seven hundred persons of both sexes. A number of young girls, dressed in white and wearing long veils, walked in front of the procession; these were followed by the matrons and the men, while the curé of the parish, with the cross-bearer, was at their head. The Curé of Nay celebrated Mass, and one of the fathers of the monastery delivered a short but touching discourse. He welcomed the pilgrims to this ancient shrine, reminded them of their long con-

nection with it, in the days of its former renown, when, on the occasion of a procession of five thousand people, the inhabitants of Nay constituted no less than two thousand of the number, and he congratulated them as the inheritors of the faith and piety of their ancestors of the sixteenth century. The band that had accompanied them from Nay, relieved by the young females, who sang their beautiful Béarnais cantiques, formed the choir during Mass, and almost the entire of the pilgrims, male and female, completed their devotions by receiving holy communion together. It was a most touching spectacle, that brought tears of love to the eyes, and filled the heart of the foreigner with profound emotion. When the service was over and their devotions finished, they scattered themselves along the greensward that skirts the river and encircles the church, partaking in family groups of the refreshment with which they had come supplied. At eleven o'clock they proceeded with their curé to Lourdes, where they terminated their pilgrimage by offering their homages at the grotto of Massabielle. An especial interest was conferred upon this pilgrimage by the fact, that among the pilgrims were two persons, a lady and a young man, both of whom had been miraculously cured through the intercession of our Lady of Lourdes, on the very first year of the apparition, 1858, and who came annually with their townsfolk to make their thanksgiving.

I was happy to have witnessed this example of the veneration with which an ancient shrine is regarded by a simple people in these days of much scoffing and little faith. The historian denominates Bétharram 'the star of Bearn and the jewel of the Pyrenees.' It is still regarded in the district as the ornament of that valley and the glory of their hills. In the time of persecution, it had been the refuge of faith; in these happier days of religious peace, it is still the source of grace and the fountain of mercy. The most remarkable circumstance that distinguishes its modern annals is the conversion of hardened sinners, whose hearts have become softened at its sanc-

tuary; while it sends forth its missionaries throughout the entire diocese of Bayonne to perfect, by their zeal and eloquence, the good work that grace had commenced at its altars.

Dr. Northcote, in his edifying and accomplished work on the 'Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna,' tells the following anecdote:—'At the close of a late retreat, one of those who had assisted at its exercise exclaimed with great emotion, "Why do they not preach like this in our parish?" One of the missionaries, who overheard him, replied, "In your parish, very probably, they preach not only as well but a great deal better than they do here; only here there is an *invisible preacher, who speaks to the heart.*" And these few words contain the secret of that wonderful influence which is felt by those who visit holy sanctuaries in the true spirit of pilgrimage. God makes Himself felt there as the *invisible preacher*. He draws souls to these his secret places, that He may *speak to their hearts*, and the long test of miraculous cures and graces which fill the chronicles of such sanctuaries are but a feeble exterior token of far more numerous and prodigious graces granted invisibly to penitent and believing souls.'* Bétharram furnishes exemplification of these remarks.

The antiquity of Bétharram, as a sanctuary of our Lady, is so great that the chroniclers do not preserve an exact account of its date. Father Peter Marca, the historian of Bearn, is the first to mention it, and he says that its origin is lost in obscurity.† It is, however, supposed to have been founded about the year 1475, at the close of the fifteenth century; and the story of its foundation resembles, in most particulars, that which we find narrated of similar occurrences in other localities.

Youthful shepherds were occupied on the banks of the Gave with the care of their flocks, when they suddenly

* *Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna*, p. 159.

† 'Il est arrivé à cette chapelle un accident semblable à celui que souffrent les anciens établissements, dont l'origine est presque toujours incertaine dans les histoires; la vieillesse, qui les recommande, leur faisant cette douce injure, de faire perdre la mémoire de leur commencement.'—*P. de Marca.*

perceived a brilliant light shining at the spot where now is the lateral chapel, called *del Pastoure.* Upon approaching the spot, they perceived a statue of our Lady. Their first impression was one of alarm, which soon gave way to one of joy and confidence. They were transported with a holy excitement, for which they could not find expression; but as soon as they recovered their presence of mind they repaired to the village, Lestelle, and informed their friends of their precious discovery. The entire population, accompanied by the priest in his sacerdotal robes, proceeded to the spot where the statue lay, and prostrated themselves in veneration before it. In this unexpected discovery they humbly recognised an instruction from God that an oratory should be constructed on the spot to the honour of his blessed Mother. The place, however, was unsuited for building, being a hard and flinty rock, and they removed the statue to the opposite bank, where they reverently prepared a niche for its temporary reception. But their surprise was great the next day on finding that the statue had been removed back to the spot where it had been found. They then placed it in the parish church of Lestelle, and locked the doors and secured the windows; but on the following day it had once more disappeared, and was again found on the spot of its first apparition. They could no longer contend against these marvellous indications, and, notwithstanding the difficulty of the work, they proceeded to build an oratory at the place where the statue had been found, and where the church stands at the present day.

This is the legend. It is supported by a long tradition, and by the testimony of successive writers. The locality itself testifies to some unusual, if not supernatural, motive for its selection. It occupies what had been an almost inaccessible declivity over the river, where they were obliged to hew rocks away at great expense, while all around there were sites favourable in every particular, and requiring little labour or cost. It seems hard to believe that men would unnecessarily have prepared a situation so unsuited to their purpose, unless compelled by some

superior and supernatural direction. However sceptics may discuss and dispute the probabilities, it is undoubted that such is the tradition, which the people of Lestelle have transmitted, through the troubles and persecutions of so many centuries, as a pious belief to their children. It is also undoubted, that after the construction of the oratory devotion to our Lady of Bétharram extended itself rapidly. It was renowned in the middle ages; and at the present day, when so many revolutions have passed over it, when so many human institutions have been overturned, it preserves its place unshaken in the affections and veneration of the people. Anciently, when the pilgrim came within view of the 'devout Chapel,' it was his custom to fling himself upon his knees and approach the sanctuary, holding a lighted taper in his hand. When the traveller crossed the bridge, he descended from his carriage, and at sight of the sacred spot prostrated himself in prayer; and these holy customs have perpetuated themselves in modern pilgrimages, which, if less difficult, have been rendered more frequent and more crowded by the facility of railway travelling.

The origin of the name of Bétharram has been a matter of interesting controversy. Some derive its etymology from two Arabic words—*Beit Haram*—holy dwelling; and they trace this derivation to the time when the Moors of Spain made predatory incursions into the Pyrenees. The learned Marca derives it from the Hebrew, in which language, according to him, *Beth-Aram* signifies House of the Most High. Others, again, suppose that the name of Bétharram, which happens to be that also of a valley and city on the banks of the Jordan, had been transferred to Bearn by one of the nobles who followed Gaston IV. to the Crusades, in memory of some deed of arms. But the most graceful and popular tradition attributes its origin to the language of Bearn itself, in which the words *Beth arram* signify the beautiful branch of a tree. It is said that the sanctuary, for a long time, was known under a name that is now forgotten. When near it, a young girl

fell into the Gave. She felt herself sinking, but in full confidence invoked the succour of our Lady, and immediately she perceived the branch of a tree floating at her side, by means of which she was enabled to reach the bank in safety. In gratitude for her rescue, she placed upon the altar of her Protectress a golden branch, and thenceforward the place took the name of Our Lady of Bétharram, or the beautiful branch. A poem, written in Béarnais, by M. V. Bataille, adopts this devout tradition. I give the original, which is extremely graphic, and a translation into English, at the end of this narrative.

O Vierge, je vous fais hommage
De ce rameau qui séchera ;
Mais, sur mon âme, je m'engage
A mettre au pied de votre Image
Un *rameau* qui toujours luira.
* * *
La chapelle, depuis, fut de tous vénérée ;
Parmi les *ex-voto* de son riche trésor
On voit briller aux mains de l'Image sacrée
L'offrande du *beau rameau* d'or.
De là le nom du lieu . . . .

It would, doubtless, be an edifying recital to narrate the history of Bétharram when the proud feudal noble of the plains intermingled with the rude shepherd of the hills, and knelt beside him at the same shrine, and together implored the same intercession. Many a touching example of haughtiness subdued and lowliness rewarded; of self-will overcome and enmity appeased, no doubt would be read in the spiritual miracles of those early times. They are the common result of Catholic missions, and the certain effect of pilgrimages made with becoming dispositions. But the materials for such a recital perished with the archives and treasures of the chapel, in a conflagration caused by the troops of the Count Montgomery, who, at the orders of the queen Jeanne, entered Bearn by the valley of St. Pé, in 1569, and delivered this sacred edifice to the flames.* The walls alone survived; but the mi-

* The destruction of Bétharram and other sanctuaries at this disastrous epoch was in execution of the ordonnance of Jeanne d'Albrecht. There are few

raculous statue was saved by a courageous priest, who managed to conceal it for a space of five years at Lestelle, and finally conveyed it to a place of safety at Jaca, in Aragon. There it is venerated to this day, under the name of Nuestra Señora de la Gasconne. But it has never returned to the 'beautiful branch.'

The invasion of Bearn by the Protestant troops was followed by a series of the most deplorable afflictions to religion, which, happily, it is not the object of this sketch to detail. For thirty years the Catholic faith was cruelly persecuted, and its followers exposed to every description of brutality and suffering, until Henry IV., having himself embraced the Catholic faith, restored to the Church its ancient liberties and possessions. In 1599, the sees of Lescar and of Oloron were restored, and their zealous bishops, of whom Bordenave has left a remarkable portraiture,* laboured with energy and success to repair the evils, which the domination of heresy had inflicted upon the country.

During this long abandonment, it would seem as if Bétharram was not altogether overlooked by divine goodness, and that the prayers of so many generations, poured forth at that spot, had not been overlooked. The contemporary historian, Marca, affirms that a bright light was constantly seen by the inhabitants of Lestelle illuminating

documents that display a more intolerant or persecuting spirit. The second article of this ordonnance recites as follows:—'La reine veut que les oratoires champêtres servant à de folles superstitions, ensemble les autels et les rétables des églises des villes et villages, soient rasés, démolis, et que les pierres et boisage soient employés à des besoins utiles.' The date of this infamous document, which contains sixteen articles, is November 28, 1569.

* 'Ceux qui ont conversé, dit-il, avec l'Evesque d'Oloron, sçavent quelle estoit la soupplesse de son esprit, combien riches et heureuses les inventions qu'il avoit pour son clergé, et avec quelle promptitude, diligence et hardiesse il les faisoit réussir et exécuter. De mesme, l'Evesque de Lescar ressembloit un ancien Patriarche, et ceux qui l'ont entendu parler en public, qui l'ont veu en chaire et ont eu cette grâce d'ouïr couler de sa bouche la parolle de Dieu, rendront ce tesmoignage à la vérité qu'ils n'ont jamais ouy parler avec plus d'esloquence, de gravité, de zèle ny d'intelligence des mystères de salut, qu'à luy. C'estoit un vieillard vénérable qui paistrissoit la manne de ses instructions avec un tel assaisonnement, que les auditeurs n'en avoient jamais avec redondance, jamais avec disette, tous avec suffisance, contentement et utilité.'—*Estat des Égl. cathédr.* p. 840. The names of these admirable prelates were Arnaud de Maytie, Bishop of Oloron, and Jehn Pierre d'Abbadie, Bishop of Lescar.

the walls of the ruined chapel at night, as if numerous lamps and tapers were burning, while celestial voices were continually heard in heavenly harmony.* The people interpreted these visions as a manifestation that the blessed Virgin still loved her sanctuary, and that it would soon be restored to her worship. And the pious inhabitants of Lestelle deserved that favour, for it is an interesting fact, stated upon contemporary authority, that the parish in which Bétharram is situated was the only one that preserved the Catholic religion, without the loss of a single member of its congregation, during half a century that the Huguenot persecution raged.†

The cruel civil war having ceased, the 'devout Chapel' soon regained its celebrity, and a remarkable miracle proved the predilection which our blessed Lady still bore to her favoured sanctuary. In 1611 a frightful epidemic ravaged Lestelle, and was particularly fatal to children. A poor woman, who had lost nearly all her children, saw the survivors attacked by the murderous malady; and in her anguish she bethought her of the power of our Lady of Bétharram, and made a vow to perform a pilgrimage to the ruined shrine, if only her children were spared. The children recovered instantaneously, and the report of their restoration to health while struck by the mortal plague was received throughout the country as a miracle. A short time afterwards another mother brought her deformed child to the holy ruins, made a vow of pilgrimage for its cure, washed its limbs in the fountain that flows underneath the chapel, and the child rose up and walked as firm and straight as if it had never been distorted.

In 1609, Jean de Salettes, secretary and friend of the celebrated Cardinal du Perron, succeeded to the see of Lescar; and in 1614 he made his visitation at the church of Nay, when he commissioned the curé, David Béquel, to

* Marca, *Merv. de Béthar.* chap. iv. p. 4. Poiré, *Cour. de la Vierge*, chap. i. p. 297.

† 'La paroisse que l'on nomme L'Estelle a été l'unique qui s'est maintenue en la religion catholique pendant tous les troubles et divisions du Béarn.'—P. Poiré.

take measures for the restoration of the 'devout Chapel.' In this he was zealously assisted by the inhabitants of Lestelle. Believing that Bétharram was destined once more to become a centre of light and grace to the diocese, and that the glory of God and the salvation of souls demanded its re-establishment, he determined to place there a congregation of priests, similar to that which for some years had directed the pilgrimage of our Lady of Garaison.

The chapel of our Lady of Garaison is situated in the valley of Magnac, in the territory of Monléon, now belonging to the diocese of Tarbes, but, previous to the Revolution, forming part of that of Auch. It, too, had fallen into decay during the civil war, but, on the restoration of religion it had the good fortune to be placed under the direction of a man of zeal and energy, adequate to replace it in its ancient rank. This man was Pierre Geoffroy, administrator of the temporalities of the archdiocese of Auch, of whom I shall have more to say when, in the next chapter, I come to write the history of Garaison. To him the bishop entrusted the re-edification of Bétharram, his experience and his piety rendering him a fit instrument for the important work. To him was united another eminent missionary, HUBERT CHARPENTIER, whose name is engraved in indelible characters on the walls of Bétharram, and whose heart has reposed for more than two hundred years near its altars.

Charpentier was born at Coulommiers, in the diocese of Meaux, in 1565. His early years were distinguished by a fervent piety, that led him to embrace the ecclesiastical state. He became a licentiate of Sorbonne; but, driven from the capital, during the wars of the League, he retired to Bordeaux, where he occupied the chair of philosophy. While there, he had a dangerous sickness, during which he made a vow to our Lady of Garaison. In the fulfilment of this vow he became acquainted with the labours of Pierre Geoffroy, in which he readily obtained permission to become united. Charpentier was gifted with an extraordinary aptitude for the direction of

missionary houses; he was an eloquent preacher, and his sermons had proved wonderfully efficacious in the reclamation of sinners and the conversion of heretics. Bearn, at this epoch, had much need of such men, as, although active persecution had ceased, the Protestant ministers were incessant in their efforts to resist the progress of Catholic doctrine. For these reasons the Bishop of Lescar desired to obtain his aid in the rehabilitation of Béth-arram. Charpentier, however, had left Garaison, and gone to Bordeaux, at the request of the magistrates, to superintend the care of the poor sick in the great hospital, and thus 'Maître Geoffroy' was compelled to commence his work without his aid as one of his coadjutors.

He set out with six priests and his choir. On arriving at Tarbes he was counselled by numerous friends to give up the undertaking, as he incurred some risk from the state of the law, which prohibited strange priests from exercising their functions in Bearn, as well as from the hostility of the Calvinists. But these remonstrances were unavailing. He persisted, and, as De Marca observes, 'terrors or threats could not hinder the work of God;' on the contrary, these obstacles were necessary to render more glorious the re-establishment of the 'devout Chapel.' In those days, the journey from Garaison to Lestelle was tedious and difficult, and not free from danger. The courageous missionaries were entertained at the château of Coarraze by the noble proprietors, the Baron de Miossens and his pious spouse. He promised to M. Béquel to protect him in his good work; he received him with respect and cordiality, and accompanied him to Nay. Having said Mass in a wretched building, as the parochial church of Nay was still in the hands of the Protestants, he administered holy Communion to a large number, and proceeded at an early hour towards the 'devout Chapel.'

The procession, at its departure from Nay, consisted of two thousand persons, and as it advanced it increased to no less than five thousand. The air rang with the sounds of sacred harmony, and it presented a magnificent sight,

although, to protect them from the fury of the sectaries, they were obliged to cover their sacerdotal robes and to lower the cross until they had passed beyond the city gates. 'It seems,' writes Marca, 'as if this procession from Nay to Bétharram was intended to give splendour to the triumph over the new sects, in the honour which they were about publicly to bestow upon the Virgin in a poor humble place, from which these exercises of piety had been banished for forty-six years.'* It was to this event that the preacher, in May 1868, made graceful allusion when addressing Catholic welcome to the worthy descendants of the pious pilgrims of 1614. Geoffroy sang the first Mass in the small oratory, into which but few of the vast multitude could get entrance, and he preached an appropriate sermon in the open air, in the square of Lestelle.

This may be the place to observe that, although it has been boldly asserted that the greater part of the population of Bearn had yielded to the persecution of Jeanne d'Albrecht, and become Huguenot, such is not the fact. This is proved by a memorial presented to Louis XIII., in 1617, by the Bishops of Oloron and Lescar, in which they state that out of every thirty souls twenty-nine were Catholic, giving a little more than three per cent. as the defalcations.† The learned historian of the 'Troubles in Bearn,' the Abbé Poëydavant, tells us that 'it is certain the greater part of the population of Bearn remained faithful to the Catholic religion in spite of the persecution which was employed to detach them from it, and that the principal result of the troubles which desolated the country arose less from the energy which sustained the old faith than from the obstinacy with which its ruin was planned, through vengeance against the Pope, Spain, and

* 'Il semblait particulièrement que celle-ci, qui fut entreprise depuis Nay jusqu'à Bétharram, fût destinée pour servir de pompe au triomphe que remportait pour lors, sur la nouvelle secte, l'honneur que les catholiques allaient rendre publiquement à la Vierge, en un petit lieu pauvrement bâti, d'où cet exercice de piété avait été banni depuis quarante-six années.'—*Traité des Merv. de Béthar.* chap. iv.

† Bordenave, *Estat des Égl. cathédrales*, p. 842.

the Catholic portion of France.'* Public functionaries and those employed about the Court furnished almost the entire portion of the proselytes, and yet impartial historians would teach us otherwise.

We have seen Bétharram, after her long years of widowhood, restored once more to life and usefulness. The glory of this restoration belongs eminently to the fathers of Garaison and the bishop, Monseigneur de Salettes; but the faithful, too, had their share, in the manner in which they seconded the efforts of their superiors. For a long time the new fathers endured many privations, wanting suitable lodging, and sometimes even the necessaries of life. There was no revenue; the property of the church, seized upon by its enemies under Jeanne, had not been restored, and the bishops themselves were so poor, and compelled to live with so much frugality, that, by way of contumely, the Huguenots designated them as *chapelains du Béarn.* What more glorious title could a Catholic bishop bear than that of chaplain of his flock!

But their blessed Patroness had not ceased to watch over them. Compassionate souls, touched by the love of Mary and her oratory, soon came to their assistance, and foremost amongst them was the noble dame of Miossens and her husband. The commune of Lestelle made the congregation donation of a small portion of land, sufficient to erect a hermitage and such other buildings as might be necessary for the accommodation of the priests required for the service of the chapel. This bit of land is described as enclosed between the public road on one side, and a line drawn a dozen paces in front of the chapel from the rock, passing from stone to stone until it reaches the farthest rock, called *Turouncoulet*, above and along

* 'Il est même certain que la plupart des Béarnais demeurèrent fidèles à la foi catholique, malgré les persécutions qui furent employées pour les en arracher, et que le plus grand effet des troubles qui désolèrent le pays provenait moins de l'énergie qui soutenait la religion ancienne que de l'opiniâtreté qui méditait la ruine, par récrimination contre le Pape, contre l'Espagne et le parti catholique de France.'—*Hist. des Troubles du Béarn, par l'abbé Poëydavant*, préface, p. 5.

the chapel.* The commune, in its generosity, made the poor priests a present of the tops of the rocks, upon which they might lay the foundations of their work; but if their undertaking appears thus full of difficulty, it will not be the less solid. This was the first acquisition of property by the new congregation at Bétharram.

Léonard de Trappes, Archbishop of Auch, is the next distinguished person who exhibited his attachment to Bétharram. He is described as a prelate of wonderful wisdom and energy, having occupied the archiepiscopal see of Auch for thirty-two years: he died in the odour of sanctity in 1629. Once more the torch of faith blazed forth anew; once more the surrounding parishes lowered their banners in holy reverence before the renovated shrine, entire cities sent pilgrims from afar, and the 'devout Chapel,' as of old, resounded with the hymn of prayer and praise in honour of the immaculate Mother of God.

The monks of the Abbey of St. Pé, the entire Catholic nobility of the country, among whom Pierre de Marca, the future historian of Bearn, then a youth, with more than six thousand persons of the neighbouring parishes, accompanied the archbishop. The enthusiasm of the people along the route was profound; so much did they rejoice to see the holy archbishop once more enabled to wear his pontifical robes, while he led the procession himself also on foot. On his arrival at the chapel, he celebrated the holy mysteries with great pomp and ineffable devotion, or, as the Chronique expresses it, 'avec les mouvemens les plus sensibles d'une "incroyable dévotion."'

The pious archbishop, in commemoration of his visit, presented to the chapel a handsome statue of our Lady, which replaced that supernatural image which had been

* 'Ce morceau de terre est renfermé entre la voie publique d'une part, et de l'autre, une ligne tirée à douze pas en avant de la chapelle, depuis la roche percée, allant de roc en roc et de pic en pic jusqu'à une dernière roche près du Turouncoulet, le tout au-dessus et le long de ladite chapelle.'—Menjoulet, *Chron. de Béthar.* p. 39.

carried to Spain during the fury of the Huguenot persecutions. He had it elevated upon the high altar, and delivered a controversial discourse full of solid instruction on the doctrines attacked by the pretended Reformation. Several conversions from Calvinism were the consequence of this sermon. The statue presented by him now stands in a niche over the entrance-door of the church: it suffered some mutilation during the great Revolution.

In order to render the installation of the new statue more solemn, and following the usage of the Church in the primitive ages, the archbishop caused a large wooden cross to be erected on the top of the hill which rises above the chapel. Again there was a large procession; the sacrament of confirmation was administered in public for the first time during more than half a century, and he received some Huguenots into the fold. It seemed everywhere as if they only needed to hear the truth to embrace it. This visit produced an admirable effect, and in further memory of his affection to our Lady of Bétharram, the good archbishop, at his death, bequeathed to the 'devout Chapel' a silver lamp, with the funds necessary to keep it burning day and night.

A singular incident is connected with the history of this cross. Shortly after it had been put up, five peasants of Montaut (a village across the Gave, opposite Bétharram) were seated at their breakfast on a green mound, in front of the hill which dominates the chapel. It was midday, the sky serene, the air calm, and no appearance upon the horizon to indicate a storm, when suddenly they heard a noise as if of a tempest at Bétharram, and on turning their eyes in that direction, they saw with horror the cross, which had been so lately erected under the auspices of the archbishop, tumble prostrate to the ground. At the same moment the whirlwind ceased, and the cross rose up of itself as if by its own power; an effulgent light environed it, and on its summit appeared a brilliant crown, which dazzled the eyes of the five gazers

by its brightness. The astonished peasants became the eager heralds of this marvel; the report spread rapidly throughout the country, and in order to satisfy the popular mind, an enquiry was instituted and commissioners were appointed by the bishop and by the civil authorities of Lestelle united, to examine into the circumstances. The result of their labour was to declare the occurrence authentic in all its particulars, and they pronounced it to be miraculous, according to the severe rules which the Church applies in the investigation of the supernatural.

It is not for us, in this remarkable event, or indeed in any other, to scrutinise the designs of Providence; we accept and venerate the exhibition of God's prodigies, without presuming to apply to it the fallible test of human science or of human judgment. This history of Bétharram would be incomplete if we omitted to record an occurrence which, at the period, excited the admiration and received the assent of the clergy and people.

Father Marca writes thus, in his treatise on the wonders of Bétharram, on the subject of this prodigy:—'If it be permitted to interpose the conjectures and discussions of human wisdom in the councils of Divine Providence, we might consider this prodigy to have been an omen of the complete re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Bearn, which was accomplished in four years afterwards. That impetuous whirlwind, levelling the huge cross in a moment, might be interpreted as a figure of the frightful persecution which desolated Bearn, attempted to extinguish the Catholic religion, and disrespected and trampled upon the sacred symbol of its institution. Its instantaneous uprising might be interpreted as the figure of the approaching triumph of the faith; while the bright crown that illuminated its head might be understood to represent the victory of the Church over its enemies.' Father Marca devotes an exhaustive chapter to this incident, and has not hesitated to accept and record it as miraculous in a history which was exposed to the criticism and contradictions of

contemporary Protestants.* Events justified these pious interpretations. Nine months after this occurrence, which the historian designates as the 'Miracle of the Cross of Bétharram,' on June 25, 1617, Louis XIII. published the edict of Fontainebleau, which re-established the Catholic religion in Bearn, and restored to the clergy their titles, privileges, and possessions, of which they had been despoiled by Queen Jeanne of 'bloody' memory, and who has well been described as the QUEEN ELIZABETH of the South.†

Louis XIII. entertained a pious affection for Bétharram. He recites, in the patent authorising its re-establishment, 'We have been especially moved to grant this request, because we know that their lives and doctrines are good, and that their example and instructions will greatly conduce to the advancement of our subjects in the way of salvation.' He had constructed, in 1625, at his own expense, the chapel of St. Louis, and bequeathed a sum of three thousand livres for its maintenance. Louis XIV. bequeathed in perpetuity an annual sum of one hundred livres, with directions that Masses should be said for the repose of his soul on the feast of St. Louis. The queen, Anne of Austria, left large bequests and founded six Masses in perpetuity for the repose of her soul. Queen Hortense, the mother of Napoleon III., presented the chapel with valuable gifts; and the Countess of Chambord, a few years ago, made an offering of her wedding-dress, which is still preserved in the sacristy. Thus has royalty at all times loved to honour our Lady of Bétharram. The native poet, Bastide, wrote: 'J'ai vu les grands de la terre se dis-

* 'Comment aurait-il osé raconter un fait controuvé, dont les protestants, qui étaient là avec leur jalousie de secte, auraient pu facilement constater l'imposture? Avouons que le témoignage d'un tel homme, dans de telles circonstances, est à lui seul une preuve très-forte.'—*Chronique de Béthar.* p. 51.

† 'Dans un tems de bouleversement où le désordre était extrême, la nation anglaise, célèbre par ses révolutions, ne fut pas la seule qui déférât à ses souverains le titre de suprématie dans les choses de la religion. Le Béarn, comme l'Angleterre, eut son Élizabeth. Le conseil de la nation déclara tacitement Jeanne d'Albrecht chef de l'Église béarnaise.'—POËYDAVANT, *Hist. des Troubles du Béarn*, tom. i. p. 138.

puter le bonheur d'embellir ce saint lieu.' It may not be irrelevant to mention in this place, that at one period the celebrated Jeanne d'Albrecht shared the general devotion to Bétharram. It was a common belief that our Lady of Bétharram succoured women in their confinement, and offerings at that sanctuary were supposed to secure them from the dangers of that perilous hour. Her father, Henri d'Albrecht, had promised to place in her custody the will which he had made in her favour, if she would sing a Bearnais song at the time when she should be seized with the throes of labour; and accordingly it gave him great pleasure to hear her, when he entered her chamber, mingling with her groans the words of the cantique which referred to Bétharram, and which I have placed at the head of this chapter :—

Nousté-Dame deü cap deü poun,
Adyudat-mé à d'aquest'hore.*

The permanent re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Bearn occupied all the zeal and energy of the Bishop of Lescar, Jean de Salettes, and of his illustrious colleague, Arnaud de Maytie, Bishop of Oloron. As soon as the general interests of the diocese had been arranged, the Bishop of Lescar turned his attention to Bétharram. It was great consolation to him that during five years that elapsed since the 'devout Chapel' had risen from its ruins, the faithful had frequented it with great fervour, and several instances of the power and favour of the Almighty had been there exhibited. He was still anxious to procure for it the superintendence of Charpentier, who, however,

* 'Après son arrivée à Pau, Henri lui promit son testament qu'il avait fait en sa faveur, avec une boîte d'or qui le contenait, à condition qu'en accouchant, elle chanterait une chanson béarnaise; ce que la princesse accomplit au moment où elle mit au jour ce prince, dont le souvenir attendrit la France. En effet, Henri fut à peine entré dans la chambre de sa fille, qu'il entendit sa voix plaintive, mêlée aux cris de l'enfantement, entonner un cantique, qui commençait par ces paroles: "Notre-Dame du bout du pont, assistez-moi à cette heure." Au bout du pont du Gave béarnais était en effet un oratoire dédié (1553) à la Sainte Vierge, qu'on regardait comme célèbre par plusieurs miracles, et où les femmes enceintes déposaient leurs vœux et leurs offrandes pour obtenir un heureux accouchement. Telle est l'application du cantique.'—Poëydavant, *Histoire des Troubles du Béarn*, tom. i. p. 76.

continued to be engaged in the exercise of his untiring charity in the hospital of Bordeaux. Although he hesitated for some time before he could leave his beloved poor, he finally yielded to the solicitations of the bishop, and undertook the mission at Bétharram, not without some misgivings. This distrust was soon dissipated, and gave way to a holy confidence in the success of the work which had been forced upon him. With that mystic intuition which belongs to the saints, he recognised the advantages which the position of Bétharram offered to the diffusion of religion and piety. He studied deeply the history of the miracles that had been performed there, making numerous and detailed enquiries into them, until he became fully satisfied that Bétharram was one of the sanctuaries for which our blessed Lady had shown the most predilection, and distinguished by her most remarkable favours.

From that moment he consecrated himself, soul and body, to the service of the 'devout Chapel,' and, uniting with the wish of the bishop, he placed it under the direction of a congregation of priests. He well understood the great power of association in religious as well as in worldly affairs. Our blessed Lord Himself approved of it by associating his disciples with his own divine work; and this sentiment it is which has inspired the community of labour and prayer, in the formation of religious orders. It is the spirit of holy association that, throughout all ages, has combined the thoughts and the affections of devoted self-sacrificing souls, binding them in an union of life and work, full of ineffable consolation to themselves and of superhuman benefit to others. And this is the spirit which, in opposition to the practice of all Christianity, modern revolution attempts to restrict and control, whenever it is applied to the service of God. But it was not thus in the seventeenth century; it was not thus when the fathers of the oratory and of St. Sulpice, when the sisters of charity and the Christian brothers united, in Christian association, for the succour and instruction of humanity, and shed such lustre upon the golden age of Louis XIV.

In this spirit, Charpentier, in 1621, instituted a congregation at Bétharram. Although at the beginning they were poor in all this world's goods, and rich only in the blessings of Heaven, they were not disheartened. They quickly commenced building a monastery for their own residence, and a hospice for the entertainment of pilgrims; they enlarged the chapel, and the charity of the faithful, especially of the city of Bordeaux, furnished them with the ornaments and vestments necessary for the celebration of divine worship.

In the course of the following year, 1622, an event took place which, in the midst of their difficulties, gave great encouragement to these pious servants of Mary. A spring of fresh water had suddenly arisen at Bétharram, at the period of the first discovery of the miraculous statue; but, during the time of its desolation, it had dried up. On the eve of the feast of the Assumption, in 1622, this spring again gushed forth, and has continued to flow ever since uninterruptedly. It passes from the rock under the high altar and church, and discharges itself into the Gave by a small outlet, to which one descends by steps. It is of much efficacy in complaints of the eye, and pilgrims use it with benefit; but the fathers are cautious in attributing to it any supernatural virtue.

While the affluence of pilgrims, the repeated conversions of heretics, and the miraculous cures of the sick, gave continued consolation and encouragement to Hubert Charpentier and his apostolic fellow-labourers, a new idea came to his aid, for the greater promotion of the glory of God and the greater incitement of sinners to repentance. Meditating upon that portion of the history of the passion of our Lord, when from the cross He constituted his Mother the mother of all mankind, saying, 'Woman, behold thy son,' Charpentier discerned the sublime concordance which exists between devotion to the passion of the Redeemer and veneration of the blessed Virgin. And in this sentiment he resolved to establish at Bétharram a Calvary and the stations of the cross, and thus unite the worship of

our Lady with the sufferings and passion of her divine Son. He thought that he might thus afford an opportunity of renewing at Bétharram those pilgrimages which, in former days, were made so commonly to the Holy Land.

It was said that Bétharram, in the configuration of the hill, bore much resemblance to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, especially on the western side, where are the torrent of Kedron, the mount of Olives, and the valley of Jehoshaphat. This resemblance has been recognised by many travellers who have visited both places, and it determined Charpentier in his project. Before he had quite matured his plans, he happened to visit a convent of nuns of the order of St. Clare at Montmarsan; and while he was discoursing with the Superioress, who was then forty-five years of age, she observed, 'Reverend father, I was very young when I entered this convent as a novice. There was here at that time a nun of over eighty years, who was born near Lestelle. I remember to have heard her often speak of the devotion at Bétharram, and of the miracles that had been performed there before the intrusion of heresy into Bearn. I remember also that she used to tell us that the chapel and its vicinity were called the Holy Land.'

At this mention of the name of the Holy Land, Charpentier was visibly moved, and he construed the anecdote as a direction that he should persevere in his intention. The increased fervour of the pilgrims soon confirmed the wisdom of his undertaking; and Marca reports that several Protestants who had gone to Bétharram to find amusement in this new devotion, and probably turn it into mockery, had returned impressed and edified, and where 'they had gone to scoff, remained to pray.' Father Poiré gives a most interesting account of this Calvary, which will be found in an extract farther on. Father Marca tells us that 'those who have visited this holy place, and experienced its consolations, can conceive better than pen can describe the sweet emotions of his grace with which

God there inundates the hearts of the pilgrims.'* On the great days of pilgrimage—Good Friday and the 14th of September—it is the custom of many to make the Way of the Cross on their knees, and those who have witnessed it describe the scene as most impressive, carrying conviction and faith to the hearts of many a sceptical spectator.

Formerly it was the custom to hear confessions on the summit of this Calvary; and mentioning this practice in his 'Chronique de Bétharram,' the Abbé Menjoulet exclaims, 'Excellent idea! It would be hard if, after having performed the stations, one's heart was not broken with sorrow.' 'Bétharram,' writes one of the missioners, Father Tontin, 'has this specialty, that no one leaves it without being moved by sentiments of piety and contrition, unless, indeed, the heart has been completely perverted, as I have been assured by several persons whose testimony cannot be doubted. Hence many unhappy sinners are induced to go there, and restore peace to their conscience by a good general confession. The meditation of what the Redeemer suffered for them on Calvary, which is presented so vividly to their mind, is enough to touch them and fill them with a salutary horror of sin and its awful consequences.'

This holy mountain had fallen into much dilapidation during the reign of Terror, and for many years funds have been wanting for its befitting reconstruction. But it is now in progress of thorough repair; and, as the venerable Superior assured me, with proud satisfaction, it would once again be considered as the noblest and holiest in France. There are nine chapels from the bottom to the top on the *Via Crucis*, each containing representations, as large as life, of the different scenes or stations of that dolorous road. The figures are admirably executed, and full of expression; they are the work of M. Alexandre Renoir, a pupil of Pradier. An accomplished sculptor and

* 'L'expérience seule de ceux qui fréquentent ce saint lieu peut concevoir, mieux que la plume ne peut expliquer, les douceurs que la grâce de Dieu y fait goûter aux pèlerins.'

a fervent Catholic, he became a hermit of Christian art, retired to Bétharram, and devoted the best years of his youth to the service of the Crucified and his afflicted Mother. At the time of my visit, many of these chapels had been finished. Several of them are used as places of interment by families at a distance, as well as in the neighbourhood; and thus is the hill of Calvary made a place of skulls. A more sacred or beautiful cemetery than those well-kept mausoleums, rendering the ascent to Calvary through death a road to immortality, it would be difficult to meet with.

The representation of the Crucifixion at the summit is very touching. The figure of our Saviour on the cross is admirable, and it is not possible to render the contrast between the good and the bad thief more expressive. The latter is full of blaspheming energy; and it thrills the heart as one gazes upon it for any length of time. Near this group there is a Pietà, in Carrara marble—a masterpiece—the work of an artist of Bourges, M. Jules Dumoulet, and is the gift of the Bishop of Bayonne, Monseigneur Lacroix. Before the Revolution, there stood on the summit, opposite the crosses, a large chapel; this now is being rebuilt from the foundation, partly at the expense of the commune of Lestelle, and partly by the donations of the pilgrims. It promises to be a magnificent edifice, worthy of the place and of the object.

This chapel, the Chapel of the Resurrection, has another interest beyond that of its architectural beauty. Under its dome is buried a man eminent for his holiness and learning, Father MICHAEL GARICOÏTS, the late Superior of the congregation of Bétharram, the fame of whose character is still on the lips and in the hearts of every household of the vicinity. An humble flag covers the spot where his venerated remains repose, with the fitting inscription:

HIC JACET MICHAEL GARICOÏTS, E LOCO IBARRE,
PRIMUS SUPERIOR MISSIŪM ALMÆ DOMUS, BETHARRAM.
OBIIT BETHARRAM, DIE ASCENSIONIS, 14 MAI, 1863.
'*Justum deduxit Dominus per vias rectas.*'

This was the versicle which the Bishop of Bayonne used as his text for the funeral oration which he preached at his interment; and it has been engraved appropriately upon his tombstone, as the brief biography of his holy life.

His death, like that of so many favourites of God, was unexpected. He had gone in the morning to Coarraze to pay his respects to the bishop, who had come there to administer confirmation. His Lordship rebuked him playfully for disobedience, in not refraining from business, according to his injunctions. On taking leave, he asked for the bishop's blessing. 'No,' he replied, 'I will not give you my benediction. You will not obey me—you harass yourself with overwork, and will kill yourself.' 'Well,' the good father replied, 'I will endeavour to observe holy obedience more strictly for the future. But I assure your Lordship that to-day I have unusual need of your benediction.' These words subsequently were called to recollection by the bishop, as a presentiment of what soon followed.

When he returned to Bétharram, he seemed in his ordinary health and spirits, talked and laughed with the students, as was his habit every evening, and retired at his accustomed hour to bed. After a couple of hours, his bell was heard to ring violently. He called for his confessor, and said he was dying. He had been seized with an attack of cholic, to which he was subject. He made his confession, received the last absolution with much contrition, and expired almost without a sigh. His reputation for wisdom and sanctity was great throughout the country. The news of his death was received with dismay; and the sentiment of the people was made apparent in their lamentations at his interment. A strong persuasion in his miraculous powers is prevalent, and his tomb is frequented by numerous suppliants, who having experienced his influence during his life, hope not to be forgotten by him after death. Several supernatural cures are reported in the neighbourhood, as having taken place in consequence of prayers at his grave, particularly amongst

children and nuns—classes in whom, when alive, he especially interested himself. The fathers of Bétharram, for the present, do not authorise the circulation of these reports, which, probably before long, will become the subject of official examination at Rome. His portrait is preserved in the refectory, and beams with mildness and wisdom. And now I will translate an extract from the funeral oration, pronounced by the bishop, which beautifully portrays his saintly character :—'The Lord led this just man along the path of wisdom and righteousness. Faith was the luminous star of his entire life; his actions were directed only to please God and advance his glory in the salvation of souls. To this lively faith he united great purity, which he preserved throughout all his life. He lived a virgin, he died a virgin. His humility was profound; he was another St. Francis of Assisi, another St. Vincent of Paul. He was simple, devoid of guile, fearing God, seeking only to do good, not to please men. Obedience, as he himself used to say, was his favourite virtue, upon which he considered all others depended. No obstacle could check his zeal: with that charity which believes all things possible, he would say, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." His virtue, never betrayed, was without fault; he seemed like the sun, brilliant at its dawn, and increasing in brightness as it rises. God has honoured his labours and crowned them with the greatest success. He used often to cry out, "O my God! behold me without heritage, without reserve, without regret, all through thy love. Have pity on me, O my God! have pity."'

The view from the summit of this Calvary is very fine—a combination of bold mountain and fertile valley, the latter dotted with towns and castles, with the rapid Gave rushing noisily through it. At the foot of a wooded declivity may be seen the ruins of Coarraze—the cradle of Henry IV.; Igon, with its splendid novitiate of the Daughters of the Cross (Filles de la Croix); and flourishing Nay, with luxurious PAU, in the misty distance. It was late in the evening when first I ascended the silent

road to Calvary. Meditating on the scenes which it represented, and thinking of the many saintly feet that had trod its toilsome path, I had but a dull eye for the lovely scenery that was spread before me. Resting for a long time at the foot of the cross, I became absorbed in the sorrows of my recollections, and exhaled a hopeful supplication that my sacrifice might be accepted, in union with that supreme agony which the typical Calvary commemorated, as personal atonement for graces abused and opportunities neglected; and I descended the hill with a spirit gentler, if not less sad. I met occasionally a peasant woman, toiling up the road, with her beads on her fingers, and stopping at each chapel to say a prayer. Perhaps she made a memento for the pilgrim from beyond the sea, as he passed her. Had she done so, it would have been only Catholic charity.

The congregation established at Bétharram by Father Charpentier was named the Confraternity of the Holy Cross, to signify its connection with the Calvary. It was joined by many pious persons, and several miracles are recorded to have been obtained through the prayers of its members. The Pope, Urban VIII., by a Bull bearing date June 3, 1638, granted special indulgences to the new confraternity. That year was one of the most remarkable in the history of the congregation, as it was then that Charpentier established at the gates of Paris another Calvary, that became celebrated under the name of Mont Valérien.

The year after Charpentier had established his congregation at Bétharram, he went to Paris, where his virtues and abilities soon became appreciated by men of the highest rank in the Church and State. At their request he undertook to establish a Calvary at Mont Valérien, similar to that at Bétharram. The idea fired him with zeal: to raise up the cross and point the road to Calvary in face of voluptuous Paris—the pleasures and dissipations which corrupt it—what a mission! In carrying this design into execution, it is not wonderful that he should

have encountered many difficulties; but, under the protection of Cardinal Richelieu and the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondi, he succeeded, and founded his congregation, consisting of thirteen priests, subject to the same rules as those of Bétharram.

Having installed the new institution, he desired once more to revisit his beloved Bétharram, thinking fondly that it might be for the last time. This was in 1637, when he occupied himself with the interests of the monastery and chapel, with all that wisdom and energy which characterised him; and having regulated their affairs, he tore himself from the embraces of his disciples, and bade them adieu with tears in his eyes. He lived for twelve years afterwards at Mont Valérien, and during that period he kept up an active correspondence with Bétharram. Fifteen days before his death he made his will, and bequeathed his heart to the 'devout Chapel,' where it reposes in a niche, covered by a slab of black marble, at the epistle side of the altar. On the slab is the following inscription :—

ICI EST LE CŒUR
DE HUBERT CHARPENTIER,
FONDATEUR DU CALVAIRE.
16 ℣ 50.

His portrait may be seen in the guest-parlour at Bétharram. It is a singularly noble and benign countenance. He wears a moustache and beard, his beads hang at his side, his hands are clasped together, and a black cowl covers his head. It was beautiful to see the veneration in which the memory of this remarkable man is held, at the end of more than two centuries, by his successors at the 'devout Chapel;' and as one of them, himself a zealous missionary and distinguished preacher, Father ETCHEGARRY, led me to the spot where his heart is inurned, his eyes glowed and his voice trembled, as if moved by a personal affection and a recent bereavement.

He died on December 16, 1650, at the presbytery of St. John in Paris, and his body was interred in the church of Mont Valérien, in the middle of the nave, where it re-

mained until the Revolution, when his grave was rifled by the infuriated populace. His coffin was opened and his remains were found in perfect preservation; but on exposure to the air they became sensibly changed. They were buried again in the cemetery of the congregation, and here they were once more disturbed to make way for the foundations of the fortifications of Paris, under Louis-Philippe.

His epitaph is the history of his life; and it seems to me that I shall do a service to my ecclesiastical readers by giving it a place in these pages. 'Near this altar reposes Hubert Charpentier, priest of Meaux, licentiate of Sorbonne, who has succumbed under the hand of the Lord, his wish having been ever to live unknown. Animated by charity, he was always a generous host; poor from his own desire, he possessed nothing for himself. Notwithstanding, he built two religious houses at the foot of the Pyrenees, over either of which, to their regret, he did not long preside. He distrusted Garaison as soon as it became wealthy, and sought the poverty of Bétharram, which he left likewise when it also became prosperous. Finally, under the episcopate of Jean-François de Gondi, first Archbishop of Paris, he fixed his residence here, and in raising up the cross, transported Calvary, as it were, from the extremity of Judea. Like a wise architect, he built upon the rock. It is here that he should have died, under the shadow of the cross. But as he was unwilling that regrets should be excited for him in the solitude which he cherished, he removed to Paris, where he died at the presbytery of St. John, in the arms of a priest who had long loved and served him. Man worthy of everlasting memory, he neither lived nor died for himself: his life was consecrated to God, and his last breath was a prayer. He died at the age of eighty-five years, on December 16, 1650.' *

Having brought my account of Bétharram to this period, which forms an epoch in its history, I will give

* Appendix A.

the abridgment of it in the quaint words of Father Poiré, as taken from his ponderous 'Traité de la triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge,' published in large quarto in 1630:—'In the diocese of Lescar there is a rather large chapel, which is called Our Lady of Bétharram; which having been destroyed at the same time as the preceding one (Sarrance) of which I have written, was repaired a short time since, and set on foot in the fashion that I am about to tell. M. Charpentier, a secular priest of rare virtue, having learned from the report of the neighbours that light used to be seen there at night, and that sometimes harmonious concerts were heard, resolved to render to the Queen of Heaven a service, which he believed would be agreeable to her, in causing her chapel to be rebuilt. And that which gave him more courage for the execution of his good intention was, that at the same period there was found among the briers an image of our Lady, holding her Son in her arms, as beautiful and complete as if it had only just left the hands of the workman. Having caused it to be placed upon the altar, the powerful Queen of Heaven so moved the hearts of all the people about, that nothing was to be seen but pilgrims arriving at the chapel.

'The king, who happened at that time to be in Bearn, the queens, and Monsieur the king's father, made large presents to it; and many private individuals contributed to build a handsome lodging-house for the pilgrims. As this chapel is situated at the foot of a small mountain, which bears much resemblance to the hill of Calvary, there has been constructed all around it eight hermitages or stations, where the pilgrims on their arrival perform their devotions, and on the height are three large crosses, with a monument representing that of the Redeemer. I am indebted to M. de la Vie, first President of the Parliament of Pau, for two striking remarks on this place, which I heard from his own mouth. The first is, that at the foot of the chapel passes a certain torrent, called the Gave, which, from its source until it empties itself in the

Adour, which must be at least the space of two days, is so rapid that it cannot be navigated; but, that when it approaches the chapel, and during all the time that it flows by it, its course becomes gentle and placid, as if it had checked itself as a mark of honour to the place where the Queen of the world is adored. The other is, that the parish—L'Estelle—wherein it is situated has been the only one that has maintained the Catholic religion during all the troubles and dissensions of Bearn, and notwithstanding the numerous persecutions that it suffered, for the space of fifty years and upwards; the blessed Virgin taking in her own hands the preservation of her devout parishioners.'*

Bétharram has had its poet as well as its historian. One of its fathers, called Pierre de Bastide, who died in 1665, has left a poem in Latin on Bétharram. He recounts, in tender effusions, its marvellous story, and records in verse the many edifying incidents which he witnessed at the 'devout Chapel.' He is happy in his descriptions of the ceremonials and decorations of the holy place, filling his readers with admiration of all that nature and art had done for the Oratory of Mary. He concludes his poem, which consists of 1,280 verses, by a prayer to the blessed Virgin. 'O Virgin! obtain for me, as the reward of my labours, not abundance of gold, nor precious stones, nor the vain glory of the world, nor soft delights, nor brilliant ornaments, but rather the gift of divine love—the light which shines in heaven, and the unalterable joys of eternal life.' With the pious Bastide, the present writer presumes humbly to pour forth the same prayer.

Most of the miracles which have attested the sanctity of this privileged spot are of ancient date. All are well authenticated, and have borne the appreciation of time. They are so numerous, that a volume would be insufficient to record them. There are many astonishing cures from

* Appendix B.

inveterate maladies, from cruel bodily infirmities; miraculous interpositions in times of pestilence; instances of sudden recoveries from insanity; but most remarkable are the miracles of grace that have been exhibited in the conversion of sinners.

Here is an instance that was witnessed by a multitude of persons. On April 12, 1631, the vigil of Palm Sunday, an inhabitant of Lourdes, about forty-five years of age, called Guillaume Martines, who had been for many years deprived of the use of his limbs, conceived the wish to accompany the pilgrims whom he saw going in great crowds to Bétharram. He followed them painfully, with the assistance of his crutches; but he felt himself full of hope. When the procession began to ascend the Calvary, he dragged himself after it with difficulty. Arrived at the station of the garden of Olives, when he had finished his prayer, it seemed to him as if his feet had become firmer. He tried to move without assistance, when he found himself able to walk to the top of the hill, perfectly cured, and carrying his crutches on his shoulders as a trophy. At his return, he deposited them in the chapel, and went back to Lourdes completely restored.

M. de Cazaux, councillor of the Parliament of Navarre, was born a Protestant, but had been converted to the Catholic faith. He retained, however, some of his former prejudices against devotion to the blessed Virgin, and was particularly incredulous regarding the miracles operated at Bétharram. His eldest son had lost the use of one of his eyes, and the physicians pronounced it beyond the power of their art to restore it. This caused M. de Cazaux much affliction; and in this condition he allowed himself to be persuaded by the piety of his wife to implore the intercession of our Lady. With this design they both repaired to Bétharram, and performed together the usual devotions. As they were returning home the next day, they were met by a messenger at Nay, who informed them that the sight of their son had been restored. A few years afterwards the same child fell dangerously ill at Bordeaux, when his parents made a vow to take him to Bétharram

for his first communion, and he recovered. The parents, however, neglected to fulfil their vow, and at the end of a few months he fell dangerously ill again. He was for several hours speechless, his death expected each moment, so that the preparations for his funeral had been commenced. But again the pious parents had recourse to Mary, and again for the third time their son was miraculously restored to them. Upon this occasion they did not delay to fulfil their vow. These facts are recorded in a letter written by M. Cazaux himself, and deposited in the archives of Bétharram.

The following account has been left by the Viscountess of Échaux, one of the most illustrious families of Navarre:—'I, the undersigned, Viscountess of Échaux, sénéchale of Bearn, attest that having fallen sick at our castle of Échaux, in the kingdom of Navarre, and diocese of Bayonne, I was in such extreme danger, that from Friday, at eleven o'clock in the morning, until Monday morning, I remained absolutely without any pulse, and as cold as ice; and having received all the last sacraments, I was abandoned by the physicians, so that the friends of the family were invited to come to my funeral. I could no longer take any nourishment, except when, to refresh my tongue and mouth, which were burning, they gave me a piece of linen steeped in tisane, as from my great weakness I could not lift my head to take a drink, nor swallow a drop of water. In this state my eldest son, about thirteen years of age, threw himself upon his knees, and invoked the intercession of the ever-glorious Virgin for my relief, making a vow that, if through her mediation with her dear Son, I should be restored to health, I would go to holy Bétharram, and in that favoured place make my thanksgiving; and he repeated several times these words, "She shall go there, my God, she shall go there; I promise you it." ("Elle y ira, mon Dieu, elle y ira; je vous le promets.") Everyone in the room heard him; when immediately it was observed that my paroxysms became less, and, contrary to the opinion of the doctors, those about me began

to entertain some hopes of my life. As soon as I was told what my son had done, I united my intention with his act; and I have now come to this holy spot to thank God and the blessed Virgin for my health, to which I have been restored through her intercession. Done at Our Lady of the Calvary of Bétharram, the 28th May, 1640. Louise d'Uza, Viscountess of Échaux.'

In June 1637, Pierre Lamotte, of St. Girons, was returning from the fulfilment of a vow at Bétharram, when he and his horse fell into the river, which was at that time much swollen by the rains, and they disappeared from view. His head was seen for a moment to rise above the water, and his hands were clasped in prayer. An hour and a half elapsed before his body was found. Life seemed extinct; but he suddenly revived and stood up uninjured. He went back to Bétharram to render his thanks anew to the blessed Virgin, to whose protection he attributed his recovery from death. A full account of these and many more miracles will be found in 'Le Traité des Merveilles de Bétharram,' by P. Marca, and in 'La Chronique de Bétharram,' ch. ix., by the Abbé Menjoulet.

Blessed by God and fostered by man, the work of Bétharram prospered beyond anticipation; but we have not many details of its history from the end of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1757, the congregation was reduced to two priests; but we find that, some years later, in 1764, they received a reinforcement, under the direction of Father Cassiet, and their missionary labours were again extended throughout the province. In 1776, a frightful mortality ravaged the cattle throughout the south of France; and finding the relief supplied by the Government insufficient for the suffering people, the Bishop of Lescar, Marc-Antoine de Noé, addressed the following pastoral to the fathers of Bétharram:—

'Missioners of the chapel of Our Lady of Bétharram, you who, without belonging to any particular portion of the flock, share with us in our general solicitude for all;

at one time, following in Apostolic footsteps, you search out the sinner, while at another time you wait for him at the foot of the cross on Calvary; your arms, like those of the Saviour, being always extended to receive those who seek you and acknowledge their sins. But yet how little leisure have you to probe their wounds and minister comfort to so many suppliants! Let, then, charity, which is the best proof of the Christian, be also the test of the penitent. Tell him that he must cancel his sins by almsgiving; and let the abundance of their gifts be the evidence of their repentance and the guarantee of their perseverance. To these offerings add your own, and thus you will contribute to increase the subscription which we desire to collect for our suffering brethren.' * This 'mandement' might well serve for a precedent in other places and times, where distress and misfortune have been the lot of the poor. As these good priests enjoyed the confidence of all classes, everyone hastened to pour his mite into their hands, and the amount collected realised the expectations of the charitable prelate.

I now come to speak of Bétharram during the ghastly period of the French Revolution, where we again have to mourn over the destruction of the holy places. It was not exempt from the spoliation which, in 1789, desecrated all the sacred places in France, under the outraged names of Liberty and Fraternity. Its possessions were the donations of individual charity, mostly contributed by retired priests, who, wishing to pass the close of their lives in prayer and meditation, might find a suitable retreat at the 'devout Chapel.' In consequence, it was not rich; its humble revenues did not amount to more than ten thousand francs; which, however, in their hands, worked much good. The decree of the National Assembly, in violation of all truth and honesty, declaring that the property of the clergy should be placed at the disposal of the nation, had gone forth. M. Cassiet, the Superior, hoped to escape the fatal

* *Recueil de différ. ouvrages de M. de Noé, év. de Lescar.* Londres, 1801. *Lettre pastor. sur l'Épizootie*, p. 74.

edict, and addressed a well-reasoned reclamation to the Commissioners of the department of the Lower Pyrenees. But his petition was of no avail, and in 1791 this most useful congregation was suppressed, and a pension assigned to its different members which was never paid. Father Cassiet took refuge in Spain, where he died. How often since has not France reciprocated the refuge of its happy soil to many a holy emigrant from Spain, driven across the frontier by the fell spirit of insatiable revolution!

In 1794, Monestier, the Commissioner employed to direct the operations of the guillotine in that district, arrived at Lestelle. He lost no time in proceeding, at the head of his satellites, to level the sanctuary. But he was opposed by a man of rare courage, M. Lescun, the Maire of Lestelle, who presenting himself to him at the entrance of the village, addressed to him a short deprecatory harangue. This did not prevent the Commissioner from proceeding to his work of destruction. His myrmidons placed their ladders against the façade of the church, and had already begun to demolish the statues, when M. Lescun implored the Commissioner to respect those masterpieces which nothing but Vandalism could destroy—'Respectez ces chefs-d'œuvre; il serait dommage de les détruire.' And, strange to say, Monestier yielded to the observation, and the statues were saved. But this disappointment served only to infuriate his followers, who, with cries and blasphemies, precipitated themselves madly upon the church, and proceeded with their work of destruction. 'Citizen representative!' cried out the courageous Maire, 'I ask, in the name of the arts, that this monument be preserved.' 'Yes,' replied Monestier, 'I grant it; but on condition that the gates of the church be walled up. Citizens, away!' Then the cry of the Jews arose under the blue sky of France: 'Au Calvaire!' ('To Calvary!') Like furious beasts, panting lest they should be deprived again of their prey, they attacked and levelled the chapels, overthrew the altars, and broke into pieces the ornaments and the figures of the stations.

Over the door of the church, on the right, was an ancient statue of the blessed Virgin, in white marble, which attracted the fury of one of the soldiers, and with the blow of an axe he knocked off its head. That same statue still exists in the same place; but it is said that the soldier who decapitated it shortly afterwards lost his own head by the guillotine. They broke up the figure of our Saviour on the cross, at the summit, which was made of lead; and it is reported that a swarm of bees issued from its side, while a swarm of hornets issued from that of the bad thief.* The only statue that escaped the revolutionary rage was that most remarkable one of the Redeemer bound to the pillar, as large as life, and which is to be seen at the right, immediately on entering the church. The order for walling up the doors proved to be also the order for its preservation. It is to be regretted that the position in which this statue is placed is so obscure, as it is with difficulty the spectator can study that mournful countenance and that agonising figure. There is at Avila, in the church belonging to the house in which the great St. Theresa was born, a most wonderful figure of our Saviour after the scourging. It was executed under the direction of St. Theresa, inspired by a vision of the flagellation that she had had. The expression of agony which pervades that statue cannot be described, and the emotion one feels in regarding this at Bétharram is scarcely inferior to that excited by the almost supernatural representation in the chapel of that very interesting church in Spain.

The inhabitants, with their valiant Maire, were successful in their resistance to the démolition of their church, but they could not prevent its sale. Fortunately, the purchaser was a proprietor of the village, who preserved it carefully, until a return to times of peace and reason permitted him to restore it to its ancient purpose. Nine

* 'On dit aussi que de la statue en plomb du Christ à la croix il s'échappa un essaim d'abeilles, tandis que celle du larron endurci ne recélait que des frelons.'—Menjoulet, *Chronique de Bétharram*, p. 163.

individuals combined to purchase the hill on which the Calvary stood. They divided it into lots, and made a covenant to keep the summit, chapels, and road in repair, at their common expense, for the religious use of the people. This clause is considered very remarkable in an official document of the year V. of the Republic.*

In 1803, Bétharram was restored to the worship of the faithful; and these pious men, who had purchased the Calvary, gave it back without any compensation. Five Capuchin fathers had secreted themselves at Bétharram when it was broken up in 1791. One only, however, had the courage to hold his ground—Father Joseph; and as soon as the reign of Terror had ceased he came forth, and endeavoured to restore the pilgrimage. Under the new division of dioceses, Bétharram no longer belonged to that of Lescar, which was absorbed by Bayonne. Among its benefactors at the period of this its second restoration, we find the name of Queen Hortense, who exhibited much devotion to this and other Pyrenean shrines.

It was not possible at that time to re-establish the old congregation, and a seminary for young ecclesiastics was formed in its place. In 1812 there was expressed an intention of suppressing this seminary, in deference to certain measures with which education had been threatened by the Emperor Napoleon. But the Abbé Baradère, curé of St. Jacques at Pau, published an admirable memoir in support of Bétharram. 'It might be possible,' he writes, 'to level Bétharram with the ground, and still the concourse that frequents it would not cease. The experience of revolutionary times has distinctly proved that it is not in the power of tyranny to extinguish the affection which exists in this country towards a spot which the devotion of our fathers has rendered dear to their children, the most part of whom were there consecrated to the Lord as soon as their infant lips could lisp his name, and

* 'Ils stipulèrent que le sommet du côteau, les oratoires et le sentier devaient rester en commun pour servir aux usages religieux des comparants, à la charge par eux de pourvoir, à frais communs, à l'entretien des toitures desdites chapelles.'—Lagrèze, *Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 88.

at certain epochs of their lives have returned there to renew the promises which had been made on their behalf. We have seen with what obstinate determination the faithful have continued their pilgrimages, even at a period when everything conspired to turn them away from it. In vain did the reign of Terror endeavour to render this sanctuary a desert; she vomited forth blasphemy, she uttered the most frightful threats, and still this devotion was never abandoned. If there remains but a single stone upon another, its votaries would still flock to its ruins; it would become for the faithful of this country that which the field of Bethel was to the child of Israel.' *

At last, in 1841, Monseigneur Lacroix, the venerable Bishop of Bayonne, had the satisfaction of placing the seminary and sanctuary of Bétharram under the direction of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, missionary priests, whose chief house is at Garaison. And thus did Garaison, after a lapse of long years, for a second time become the parent and nurse of the 'devout Chapel.' The occupation of these fathers is primarily the instruction of youth, the superintendence of the ecclesiastical seminary ('petit séminaire'), and, continually, the direction of the pilgrimages, preaching and giving missions throughout the diocese. They further offer an asylum to priests desiring to remove for a time into retirement, as well as to laymen who may wish to make a spiritual retreat. There are numerous confessionals in the church, and priests are always to be found ready to administer advice and consolation to those who seek either. On the great festival of the Exaltation of the Cross, no less than thirty confessors usually attend; and they often protract their arduous labour from early morning throughout the long night. There are instances of pilgrims who, having waited for hours to get to the confessional and receive absolution, lie down upon the floor of the church to sleep, and thus await the completion of their devotion at the earliest Mass, by the reception of holy Communion.

* *Manuscr. arch. de Bétharram.*

I have wandered long about Bétharram and its holy recollections, and I have not yet described the church, although it was the first object of my visit. It scarcely realised the expectations that I had formed; but its physiognomy, if one may so speak, is conformable to its simple, pious, enduring history. Its façade is deficient in massiveness, but possesses a certain ornate dignity that harmonises with the scenery and legend. It is formed of white and black marble, intermixed, and is surmounted by a large clock, above which rises a quaint spire. The statue of the blessed Virgin over the door deserves attention. It has an expression of great softness, which reflects the piety as well as the genius of the sculptor, and is said to be the statue presented by Léonard de Trappes. The interior consists of the nave and two aisles. The effect on first entering is gloomy but impressive; and one soon comes to love its 'dim religious light.' There are three altars. The high altar is very rich in gilding, and produces a pleasing effect, with its twisted columns, representing grapes and vine-leaves. Statues of saints adorn it, and the reredos, rising up to the roof, is very handsome. Several ex-votos are suspended about it; among them is a valuable silver branch, which was presented by the Archeological Society of the Basses-Pyrénées to M. Bataille, as a prize, in acknowledgment of his exquisite poem, 'La Capère de Bétharram.' With becoming piety, the accomplished bard offered his wreath on the altar of Her whose legend he has so well sung.* At the right-hand side of this altar reposes the heart of Hubert Charpentier, of which I have already made mention.

The chapel at the right side of the altar is called *La Pastoure*, or that of the Shepherdess. It stands on the spot where the miraculous statue was originally found; and represents the story of the apparition in relief. The church is covered with paintings representing the life of Christ. On the panels of the organ, and in the tribune, is

* This poem and its translation will be found at the end of the present chapter.

again represented the history of the apparition, the condition of the 'devout Chapel' after it had been ravaged by the Calvinists, groups of sick people miraculously restored to health, and prisoners freed from their chains through the intercession of our Lady of Bétharram. A beautiful altar and statue, ornamented with green in honour of the month of May, occupied at the time of my visit a place in the sanctuary, and gave brilliancy to the otherwise sombre character of the church. It has been proposed to enlarge and alter this church, but the fathers, with excellent judgment, have considered it better to preserve untouched its ancient walls, that have been hallowed by the vicissitudes of centuries. The organ is a gift from the Emperor, offered on the occasion of his visit to the Pyrenees, a few years ago. In front of the façade of the church, and lying closely under the hill of Calvary, are ranged a number of white tents for the sale of beads, pictures, and other memorials of the pilgrimage. The beads and shells manufactured here are much prized, especially those of the large nut, which is often worn in coils round the neck. These tents have quite an Arab appearance, not unsuitable to the traditions of the holy mountain above them.

About one hundred and fifty young seminarists attended evening prayer. Their manly chant of the Litany of Loretto well corresponded with the sentiment of the spot, while it evidenced the deep Catholic spirit that pervades education in France, wherever it is not in the hands of the Lycée, to an extent that may not be credited by those who derive information from the pages of liberal journalism.

When I left the 'devout Chapel,' the 'roseate hues of even' were gilding the snowy summits and blending with the silvery river. I rambled away into a deep ravine, by the side of the rushing Gave, and thoughts of bygone days, of the sainted and beloved dead, mingled so deeply with the aspirations that had been stirred within me by Calvary and our Lady of Sorrows, that I made a vow to offer this book, as my ex-voto, at her beloved shrine, in

homage to Her, who has ever been my refuge and my consolation—*Refugium peccatorum, Consolatrix afflictorum.*

I ought not to take leave of Bétharram without acknowledging my obligations to the reverend Superior, Father CHIRON, for the information which he placed at my disposal, rendered still more valuable by the cordiality with which it was given, and by the anxiety which he evinced for the success of my work. The striking portrait of his predecessor, the saintly Father GARICOÏTS, hangs in the refectory, and they did me the favour of showing it to me. Long may it be before that of the present Superior is placed by its side; although in wisdom and learning it will form a suitable pendant. I cannot better conclude this long, but I hope not uninteresting chapter, than with a translation of the prayer to our Lady of Bétharram. The original will be found in the Appendix.

LA CAPÈRE DE BÉTHARRAM.

Nousté-Dame deü cap deü poun,
Adyudat-mé à d'aquest'hore.

I.

Quoan lou Gabe, en braman, dits adiü à las pennes,
Y s'abance, à pinnets, à trubès boscs et prats,
Qué diséren qué craing dé rencountra cadénes
Süs bords de mille flous oundrats.

Aü bou temps deüs Gastous, ue béroye Capère
Counsacrade peü pople à la May d'eü boun Diü,
La qui touts ans dé loueing lous *Beürraimés* * appère,
Qu'ère déjà ségude aü bord d'eü gran Arriü.

Mes n'ère pas labets coum adare noummade,
N'ère pas *Bétharram*: qu'eb bouy donc racounta,
Lous més amics, quin hou la Capère estréade
Deü noum qui tien despuch-ença.

* Name given to those who make a pilgrimage to Bétharram.

PRAYER.

'Queen of Heaven! strength of the weak, light of the blind, comfort and support of souls that suffer, be thou to us, O Mother, the "blessed branch" beneath which we may find shelter for our griefs and our miseries. Do thou, who never dost disregard the prayers of those who address themselves to thee with confidence, have pity on the poor and infirm. Look on the wounds of our souls and of our bodies. Oh, let thy gentle hands dress them and heal them. At least, if God wills that our place shall be with thee on Calvary, do thou, who art all-powerful with Him, obtain for us the virtue requisite to suffer with resignation, in order that, purified in body and in spirit, we may attain with thee, O Mother, the abode of eternal joy. *Amen.*'*

THE CHAPEL OF BÉTHARRAM.

Our Lady, who the bridge protects,
Assist me in this hour.

I.

When the Gave, rushing down from the rocks to the plain,
Bounds foamingly forward, by forest and mead,
One would say that it feared on its borders some chain
Of gay flowers its impetuous course would impede.

In the good time of Gaston, there stood on its bank—
The work of our sires—to God's Mother a shrine;
And pilgrims came there, of all ages and rank,
To offer to Mary their homage divine.

This hermitage modest, years ago, we are told,
Was not known as BÉTHARRAM—the beautiful bough;
But, brave sons of Bearn, if you list, I'll unfold
In your own ancient tongue why men call it so now.

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*Appendix C.

II.

Drin aü dessus de la Capère,
Ue hilhotte deüs embirous
Houléyabe, bibe et leüyére,
Y qu'emplćabe sa tistère
De las mey fresques de las flous.

Moun-Diü! la béroye flourette
Quis'mirailhe hens lou cristaü,
Hens lou cristaü d'aquère ayguette,
Y tà bribente, y tà clarette,
Qui ba bagna lous pès de Paü!

Per la coueilhe ère s'esdébure;
Lou pè que l'eslengue y qué cat. . . .
Gouyats! la terrible abenture!
Lou Gabe à l'arrouyousse allure
Qué la s'emboulégue aü capbat.

La praübotte eslhéba soun âme
A la qui sab noustes doulous:
Dé tire cadou bère arrame
D'aüprès d'eü loc oùn Nouste-Dame
Adyude lous sous serbidous.

Y, chens s'abusa, la maynade
Séseich, en l'entreignen pla hort,
La branque peü Ceü embiade:
Per aquet moyen ey saübade
Y douçamen miade aü bord.

Taüs las nôres du patriarche
Bes'crédèn pergudes, pari,
Quoan, pourtan l'arramette à l'arche,
La Couloume per sa désmarche
Deü délutyé annonça la fi.

D'ue fayçou tà merbeilhouse
Puch qu'es arringade aü trépas,
Migue, hens la Capère oumbrouse
Dé ta patroune bienhurouse
Bet'remetté de toun esglas.

II.

Near the bless'd roof where Mary watches,
The daughter of a neighbouring peasant,
Quick as some lively bee that snatches
Sweet honey's dew from flowery patches,
Her basket fills with nosegays pleasant.

She starts: what wondrous flower can ever
Such rare resplendent colours show?
Its hues are mirrored in the river,
That rapid flies, as from a quiver,
And bathes the feet of peerless Pau!

To pluck the bud she scrambles low;
Her small feet slip. The bounding Gave—
O gallant swains! bend down in woe,
Let mourning clothe your saddened brow—
Has swept her neath its wandering wave!

In this dread hour, abandoned, dying,
She lifts her soul for Mary's aid,
Upon her help alone relying,
Which never fails the sad and sighing,
And lo! a branch floats by the maid!

Struggling, the drowning girl succeeds
To grasp the succour sent by Heaven;
She gasps, she rises from the weeds,
She struggles through the slimy reeds,
And to the bank is safely driven.

Thus, on the surging waters' crest,
Death stood at Noah's trembling side,
Until the branch of Hope expressed,
In the bird's beak, that there was rest,
And God had stemmed the Deluge tide.

And now, since Mary's gracious power,
Miraculous, hath saved thy life,
Betake thee, child, this very hour,
Unto her chapel, there to pour
Your heart away, with warm thanks rife.

Diü de you ! quin es marfandide !
Quin trembles dé reth y de poü !
Dé ta raübe blangue gouhide,
Y de touns peüs, l'ounde limpide,
En gouteyan, muilhe lou soü.

'Chens boste ayde, qu'èri pergude,—
Ça dits-ère,—Reyne deü Ceü !
Arrés n'a bist quoan souy cadude ;
Més bous qui m'abet entenude,
M'abet adjudade aüta leü.

'Boune May, pertout quens'demoure
La tendresse de boste amou,
Quoan roullabi capbat l'escourre,
Qu'abet dat ourdi à la cassourre
Qu'embiesse ue arrame entà you.

'Youb'offri dounc ma bère arrame ;
Qué l'ab'dépaüsi sùs l'aüta ;
Y-mey que hey bot en moun ame
Qu'aci daban bous, Nouste-Dame,
Gnaüt *beth arram* qué lusira.

'Sente-Bierye, n'oub-caü pas cragne
Qué m'en desdigue lou mé pay :
Souns moutous pèchen la mountagne ;
Souns blads croubèchen la campagne ;
Qu'eü héra counsenti ma may.

'Y you dab ue ardou nabère,
En mémori de tout aço,
Tout més, en aqueste Capère,
Oùn boste sente amou m'appère,
Bierye, queb'oubrirey moun cô ! '

III.

La Capère despuch estou fort renoumade.
Aü miey deüs *ex-voto* dé soun riche trésor,
Qué byn enter las mas d'ue imatye sacrade
L'ouffrande d'ù *beth arram d'or.*

Preserve her, God! her wet limbs quail,
With terror and with cold they quiver;
Her white robe flutters on the gale,
Moistening the green sod of the vale,
Her long hair dripping from that river.

'O Queen of Heaven!' she meekly said,
'Without thine aid, in truth, I'd perished;
No human eye my fall surveyed,
No human hand my fall had stayed,
'Tis thou alone who saved and cherished!

'Sweet patroness of me and mine,
Thy favour ever I invoke!
If e'er the waters round me twine
Their fatal eddies, Maid divine,
Oh send me this same branch of oak!

'O Virgin pure! in homage take
This fragile branch that soon must dry;
But in my soul deep vow I make,
Under thy feet a branch I'll break,
To shine eternal in the sky.

'It cannot be, sweet Virgin bless'd,
My father can't refuse my vow!
His flocks browse on the mountain's crest,
The fields are by his crops possess'd,
And to my mother's voice he'll bow.

'And I, in glowing love and faith,
And gratitude for life and grace,
Each month will walk the holy path
Unto thy shrine, and till my death,
Mary! my heart in thine will place.'

III.

Though long ages have passed, this shrine has been sought,
In pilgrimage weary, by young and by old;
But none of the offerings the pious have brought
Exceed in their value that oak-branch of gold.

D'aquiü, lou noum deü loc. Souben, loueing deü hourbari,
Oun qué s'y ba goari de toute passiou,
En retrempan soun ame aü pensa salutari
Deüs turmens qui per nous patì lou Saübadou.

Courret tà Bétharram, hilhots de la Nabarre,
Poplés de la Gascougne y deüs bords dé l'Adou :
La Bierye à Bétharram nou hou yamey abare
Deüs trésors deü dibin amou.

VINCENT BATAILLE.

And this is the legend how Bétharram was named.
In solitude there, from the noise of the city,
How many a soul, from its errors reclaimed,
Hath found in the Saviour forgiveness and pity!

Haste onward to Béth'ram, ye sons of Navarre,
From Gascony's plains to the rolling Adour;
Oh! come from the homelands, or come from afar,
There is no spot that Mary loves fonder or more!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF GARAISON.

OUR LADY OF GARAISON.

Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.—*Hymne.*

'O Chapelle de Garaison! tu as été des dernières que cette mère miséricordieuse a regardées dans notre France de son œil favorable, pour y graver les marques de sa main ouvrière de miracles. Mais quoique des dernières en élection, tu ne restes pas d'être des premières en faveurs; l'antiquité acquiert aux autres le bonheur d'avoir été plutôt choisies, non l'honneur d'être plus chéries, et tu n'es pas moins avant dans ses bonnes grâces pour y être plus tard entrée.'—*Le Lys du Val, par Molinier.* (1630.)

THE extract which I have placed at the head of this chapter, from a work published in 1630 by the Abbé Étienne Molinier, the first historian of Garaison, speaks of it in terms of compassion, on account of its recent origin; and he laments its inferiority, in point of antiquity, to the sanctuaries of Loretto, of Monserrat, of Chartres, and of various others which he enumerates. At the period in which I write, 1868, this objection no longer exists, and Garaison may now be regarded as one of the most ancient of the Pyrenean shrines; younger, indeed, than that of Sarrance, but almost equal in age to that of Bétharram, with which it is closely connected in many eventful phases of its history.

I left the railroad, on the line from Pau to Toulouse, at Lannemezan, on the forenoon of May 27, with the intention of proceeding by the omnibus to Garaison, which is seventeen kilomètres distant. Lannemezan is a small straggling town, in the centre of an agricultural country. It is pleasantly situated, almost at the opening of the Val d'Aure, and commands a magnificent view of the Pyrenean range. It was the market-day, and the streets were

crowded with a busy, sharp-visaged, well-clad, thrifty population. I had missed the hour of the omnibus, and after a little delay, the civil host of the Hôtel de France sent me forward in a wretched crazy vehicle, well suited to my pilgrim character.

For some time the road lay through a well-cultivated country, interspersed with oak woods; but, as we advanced, the soil became sandy and poor, plains of green fern superseded the young maize, and the general aspect resembled that of the Landes, where reclaimed. In due course we arrived at a cross-road, where, on a large board painted on a light blue ground, we read the welcome words, 'ROUTE DE N.-D. DE GARAISON.' Passing some fine timber, through which the evening sun was glimmering picturesquely, we descended into a quiet solitary valley. The red towers of an ancient structure peered above the thick green foliage; a well-cultivated hillock sheltered it at each side, and there was no sound of human habitation near to break the solitude. Not far from the monastery, however, there is an auberge, where accommodation is afforded to the traveller or pilgrim, whichever he may be, at very moderate cost and with very moderate comfort. This is a rude dilapidated farmhouse, with creaking staircase, tumble-down balcony, and large bedrooms, furnished with beds sufficient to afford repose to an entire caravan. Fortunately, on this occasion, I was the only human occupant. The poultry were chirping in the untidy courtyard; the females of the household were sitting at needlework outside the cumbrous doorway, and I was set down in the balcony to a very indigestible dinner, in company with the Intendant of the convent, who entertained me on the merits of a liqueur manufactured by the community, under the name of *Garaisonneuse*. Altogether, it seemed rather as if I had alighted at some primitive inn in Sicily, thirty years ago, than in the outskirts of modern France. It is, however, a resting-place well suited to the neighbourhood of a pilgrimage; and it possesses some historic interest from the fact, that the

proprietor, M. Noguez, is the descendant of the person who had purchased the monastery and its appurtenances from the Republic, and who subsequently, in 1834, resold it to the Bishop of Tarbes, that it might be restored to its ancient purposes.

I lost but little time in proceeding to the convent, where I was warmly received by the reverend Superior, Father PEYDESSUS. Having informed him of the object of my visit, he devoted himself to me during the afternoon with a cordiality and kindness of which I retain a very grateful recollection; and I gathered from his lips much of the history and traditions of the place. We sat for a considerable time, until darkness wrapped us round, on a bench under the branching trees, in front of the great portal of the convent; and in presence of its solitude and at the side of this venerable priest, the Superior of all the missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, I felt how beautiful is that fraternity, and how strong that bond of faith, which make all true Catholics as brothers, and engage them in holy intimacy, without further introduction than their community of belief, from whatever country they may come, or whatsoever tongue they may speak.

When I entered for the first time the silent court, a sentiment of profound reverence took possession of me. Before me was the marble façade of the chapel, delicately chiselled with statues of saints in the niches at both sides. Above the doorway is a quaint representation in relief of the Shepherdess, ANGLÈZE DE SAGAZAN, and the circumstances of the apparition; under this relief is placed a statue of our blessed Lady, remarkable for its virginal beauty and simplicity, having, underneath, the legend, 'Ici je répandrai mes dons,' and above it the words, 'Ecce mater tua.' On the left of the church, and in a recess, is a small oratory, erected on the spot where the blessed Virgin is said to have appeared to the shepherdess. Above it is the inscription:

FONTAINE DE LA BERGÈRE.
Mater pietatis, ora pro nobis.

At the foot of the altar in this recess is a well, the waters of which run under the high altar of the church, and which is celebrated for the cures that have been miraculously operated through its agency. On the right of the church stands the massive old monastery, with a long arcade or ambulacrum, where its inmates may take their exercise in bad weather; it constitutes one side of a solitary meditative square, shadowed by tender acacias, where many a pilgrim has recited his beads, protected from the southern sun. There is an unfinished wall, commenced in 1776, but never completed, that seems intended as an extension of the monastery, and now encloses the court and separates it from the high road.

In another court, the southern, there is a fountain known as 'La Bergère,' surmounted by a statue of our Lady in white marble, erected in 1630, and which has somewhat suffered from exposure to the weather and neglect during the revolutionary epoch. The bubbling water gushes forth at the feet of the statue, and is conveyed through four grotesque heads to a large basin, signifying that Mary is the fountain through which her divine Son loves most abundantly to pour his heavenly graces. Outside the building, at the southern side, there are the remains of an alley of plane trees, among which formerly stood an ancient cypress, which was long the object of especial veneration, as it was popularly believed that the shepherdess Anglèze was wont to repose under its shade while tending her sheep. There is no sufficient authority, however, for this supposition; and as it had begun to decay from age, the fathers condemned it to be cut down and cast into the fire.

Nothing can be more solemn or subduing than the aspect of the church on first entering it. Like that of Bétharram, it is sombre and dimly lighted; there is a low antique vestibule leading into the nave, the arches are heavy, in the Norman style, and the walls are covered by a profusion of painting and mosaics. Round the portico, on entering the church, may be observed a number of small paintings, extremely curious, which repre-

sent in detail the history of various miracles, attributed to our Lady of Garaison. These escaped the devastating hand of the Revolution, by some special intervention, which has preserved them to our days as valuable illustrations of the miraculous history of the place. Advancing from the vestibule to the nave, one is impressed by the grandeur and regularity of the *ensemble*. The high altar is not distinguished by any especial furniture, nor is the reredos remarkable for anything beyond the statue of our Lady of Dolours, with her crucified Son upon her knees. This, indeed, constitutes the armorial bearings of Garaison: our Lady of Sorrows presides over all its history, and is represented on the memorial pictures which the pious visitor loves to purchase, and thus keeps ever present that most sad and moving scene of her divine life. Before the Revolution, this church was adorned with several statues, remarkable as works of art. One of them only has been preserved; it is near the organ, represents the Saviour teaching his Apostles, and was so firmly planted in the wood, that the Iconoclasts of the Revolution were unable to remove or destroy it. They succeeded, however, in maiming one of the hands.

Garaison stands in the ancient province of Aquitaine, in the former diocese of Auch. It is distant fifty kilomètres, or thirty miles, from Tarbes, and twenty kilomètres, or twelve miles, from St. Bertrand de Comminges and the Garonne. It now belongs to the diocese of Tarbes, which is peculiarly fortunate in possessing so many sanctuaries and pilgrimages dedicated to the blessed Virgin. Writing of the locality in 1630, its historian, the Abbé Molinier, says, 'Although the valley is not far distant from large towns, in the neighbourhood of a fine river and of fertile land, its own condition is sterile and ungrateful.' The soil is cold and sandy; no seed will fructify, and if it happens to germinate, it prematurely perishes from the severity of the climate. It is subject to constant fogs, frequent rains, and cloudy atmosphere. Its chief productions are briers and ferns; and if at present (1630) one sees

a few fields cultivated, a few trees planted, it may serve to show how industry can conquer nature, although it may yield but a scanty return to persevering labour.

'On the side of the Pyrenees and Bigorre, through an extent of more than seven leagues of country, extend large plains, whose soil neither plough nor harrow has ever penetrated. Their only produce is the sterile fern, which constitutes the sole harvest as well as the sole ornament of this vast solitude. This country, desert as it is, is not favourable even for game, with the exception of a few rails in autumn, which follow in the train of the quails. Indeed, it would almost seem as if God had designed that it should bear more than one feature of resemblance to that mighty desert in which the children of Israel wandered for forty long years, and often would have perished, had it not been for the assistance of the poor quails.'*

Such is the description that has been left us of Garaison in the seventeenth century; but, happily, at the present day it no longer presents that wild and dreary appearance which Molinier has so feelingly described. Sufficient evidence of its former condition may still be discerned in the nature of the land to the south of the sanctuary, near the village of Arné. Constant labour, patience, and attention on the part of the fathers have 'made the desert smile,' and given life and productiveness to solitude and sterility. The traveller formerly pursued his weary way through a sombre, monotonous, and fatiguing landscape; he now may journey, under the same skies, through an agreeable and fruitful valley. The horizon, on one side, is bounded by long rows of tall trees; around are numerous whitewashed farmhouses, surrounded by well-grown clumps; and in the distance is a magnificent alley of secular oaks, overtopping which rises a graceful spire, indicating the position of the church and monastery. The ancient fathers of Garaison well understood the nature of the soil, and finding that it was peculiarly favourable to

* *Le Lys du Val de Garaison*, p. 3.

the growth of the oak, they planted the acorn extensively, and obtained the best results from the experiment. About twenty years ago, the finest oak forests in France existed around Garaison; but these noble forests have been levelled, through the miscalculating cupidity of some new proprietors, and in their place they have attempted a cultivation which is not suited either to the soil or the climate.

But at the epoch of its greatest sterility, when it was denuded of all the comforts of life, God vouchsafed to enrich it, through the interposition of his blessed Mother, with the abundance of his choicest favours. The desert suddenly was peopled, rich harvests were gathered, and countless pilgrims, from far and near, found food, shelter, and consolation in its bosom. The event which produced this great change occurred at the period when Protestantism, under the protection of the sovereign, had unfurled its banner throughout Bearn and Navarre.

About the beginning of the sixteenth century, the blessed Virgin manifested herself to a young shepherdess of the valley of Garaison. It was almost the first of those miraculous apparitions which, from time to time, have testified her appreciation of the faith and the religious fidelity of certain portions of France. A young girl, twelve years old, of the name of ANGLÈZE DE SAGAZAN, belonged to a family that was very poor. The cabin in which they lived is described by contemporaries as so wretched as not to have had any windows, and to have given admission to the wind and rain at every side, although impervious to the light of day. Molinier states that he himself had visited this cabin, and has left us the description of it. Anglèze was minding her sheep in the vicinity of this poor cottage, and occasionally biting a black crust, she dipped it in the neighbouring stream to soften its extreme hardness. As she watched her sheep, she sat on the brink of the spring, which flowed by the spot where now stands the high altar of the church. Tradition says that this fountain was shaded by a large

whitethorn-bush, under which travellers were accustomed to sit and shelter themselves during the heat of the sun.

Anglèze sat daily by this fountain, as she ate her mouldy crust, when one day, shedding her accustomed tears over the miserable poverty of herself and parents, she suddenly beheld a wonderful vision. A lady of divine beauty, grave in her appearance, with gentlest eyes and serenest countenance, clothed in a white robe that descended in long folds to her feet, stood before her.* The child, dazzled by the apparition, and rapt in ecstasy, was unable to ask a question. But the beautiful lady, with great sweetness, spoke, and told her that 'she was the VIRGIN MARY, Mother of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ;' that she had selected that place as a receptacle of her favours; that she desired that a chapel should be built there in her honour; and ordered her to inform her father and direct him to convey the message immediately to the priests and inhabitants of the neighbouring town of Monléon. Having said all this, the vision disappeared.† Anglèze quickly informed her father of the marvellous message, and, being a simple, religious man, he hastened to announce it, as directed, to the people of Monléon; but they could not bring themselves to credit the tale of a silly shepherdess.

The next day Anglèze found herself again at the same spot, when the same vision presented itself to her in the selfsame form, and again desired that her father should return to Monléon, and urge the inhabitants to believe in her vision; telling them to take courage, that although it might seem a mighty work for people so poor to undertake the construction of a church, God would assist them and enable them to bring it to completion. This time the persistence of the child and her father made some impres-

* 'Une dame d'une beauté divine, au port grave, aux yeux gracieux et à la face sereine, revêtue d'une robe blanche qui descendait à longs plis jusqu'à ses pieds, se présenta devant elle.'—*Lys du Val*, p. 7.

† 'Mais soudain la dame, la prévenant par sa douceur, lui déclara qu'elle était la Vierge Marie, mère de notre Rédempteur Jésus-Christ; qu'elle avait choisi ce lieu pour le combler de ses bénédictions; qu'elle voulait y avoir une chapelle; et à ces fins, lui commanda d'en aller avertir son père, afin qu'il en donnât promptement avis aux habitants de la ville de Monléon. Cela dit, elle disparut.'—*Ibid.* p. 8.

sion upon the people; but they could not yet persuade themselves of the truth of her narrative, although recorded by her with much precision and detail. Sad and disappointed at the failure of her father's mission with the people, Anglèze returned for the third time to the fountain. On this occasion she was accompanied by some members of her own family, and by several neighbours. No sooner had they arrived at the well, than our blessed Lady showed herself, as on the two previous occasions. They all heard her voice and the words which she spoke, but no one saw her except Anglèze. As it is said of the vision of St. Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles, 'Audientes quidem vocem, neminem autem videntes.'* At the same instant, some coarse black bread, which Anglèze was carrying in her little basket, was suddenly changed into white bread of the finest quality. On seeing this, the bystanders simultaneously cried out, 'A miracle! A miracle!' and declared themselves convinced of the reality of the apparition. But the wonder did not cease there; the voice audibly directed the father of Anglèze to return to his cabin, telling him that he would find an old chest, which was almost his only piece of furniture, filled with loaves of white bread, enough for the provision of several days, and cautioning him not to omit thanking God for his bounty. The incredulous were convinced by this second miracle.

The consuls, who in those days filled the office of the modern préfet, were informed of the marvellous occurrences; they reported the matter to the curé, and the news rapidly spread throughout the neighbourhood. The clergy, clad in their sacerdotal robes, accompanied by the entire population, with the consuls at their head, proceeded in procession to the favoured fountain; and there, according to the ancient usage of the Church, planted the cross and took possession of the place in the name of our Lady. The air rang with acclamations, and pious cantiques were composed and sung in celebration of the event. Molinier states that he received these particulars

* Acts ix.

from the mouth of a man of seventy years of age, who was nephew of the shepherdess, and bore the name of Sagazan. He further tells us, that at the period when he published the first edition of his account of the transactions, many of those who had spoken with Anglèze, and heard the story from her own lips, were still living. He devotes a long dissertation to the proofs of this apparition; supported by the concurring evidence of five witnesses, sustained by public notoriety, by written authentic documents, and by the miraculous results which visibly and incontestably followed.

A small chapel was erected on the spot in 1523, and shortly afterwards, in 1540, was built a handsome church on the site on which the present now stands. This fine building, undertaken and completed solely at the direction of a peasant-girl, in a barren impoverished district, by a few unlettered people, whose thoughts turned rather to the things of earth and their daily bread than to those of heaven; the continued concourse of pilgrims, undiminished through long years and great vicissitudes; the numberless miraculous cures—the paralytic restored to health, the blind restored to sight; the wonderful conversions of notorious sinners, the no less wonderful consolations and blessings experienced by the sorrowing and afflicted in their visits to Garaison, constitute a series of cumulative arguments in proof of the reality of the apparition to Anglèze, which I have neither the heart nor the head to resist.

It is related by St. Gregory, in his Dialogues, that our Lady appeared to a young girl of the name of Muse, clothed in white and surrounded by a choir of virgins, attired like herself. The apparition at La Salette, and again that more recent apparition at Lourdes, have been authenticated by evidence that would be held conclusive in a court of human law, and I see no difficulty in accepting the tradition of Garaison, although more remote in its incidents than the two latter, as worthy of our faith and devotion.

This apparition occurred at a period when heresy had begun to spread its poison throughout the south of France, when the stoutest minds gave way before the baleful energy of the unscrupulous sovereign, and when the people were deprived, by royal ordonnance, of the ministry and instruction of their clergy. 'The queen,' says the first article of the Ordonnance of November 1569, 'desires that the Word should be announced by those who, being called by God, alone have a lawful vocation; for which purpose she annuls, breaks, banishes, and proscribes all exercise of the Roman religion, without any exception; such as masses, vespers, processions, litanies, vigils, feasts, images painted or in relief, lights, offerings, especially such as are habitually made at interments.' And again, in the tenth article of the same, 'It is further prohibited to all monks, priests, and other ecclesiastics any more to seduce the people, either in public or in private, or even to remain in the country, unless by the express permission of her Majesty.' It was at such a period that our Lady vouchsafed to manifest herself at Garaison, as if to supply an all-powerful antidote to the devouring plague. It was in the country of Aquitaine and Bearn that Calvinism had made the most extensive ravages, and thus their neighbourhood would appear to have been the most fitting place for such supernatural manifestations of divine power as might confirm men in their faith and courage. It is remarkable, as has been told already of Lestelle, that the district of Magnoac, in which Garaison is situated, was preserved almost entirely uncontaminated by the contagion. While Languedoc and Aquitaine were seriously infested, the district which our Lady had chosen for her sanctuary remained comparatively pure and undefiled.

This sanctuary was known at first as that of Our Lady of Mercy, but it soon took the title of Our Lady of Garaison. Some writers affirm that this name was given to it from the many wonderful cures operated there—*Guérison*, and from thence *Guaraison*, which has been modernised into Garaison. The most probable conclusion

is that the name was taken from that of the district in which the oratory is situated. Molinier observes, 'It seems to me that the name which this place bore from all antiquity was a presage of the blessings which Heaven would shed upon it one day by so many miraculous cures, and that it was not so much by chance and accident as by the design of Divine Providence that the spot, which was to become remarkable for so many corporal and spiritual cures, was called Guaraison.'*

At first, and during some time, this church was the property of the Curé of Monléon, who received and controlled the expenditure of all the offerings; but as he resided at a distance, much inconvenience arose from the intervention of his authority. This abuse, if such it was, was corrected by Pierre Geoffroy, whose name so often occurs in the history of Garaison and Bétharram. Geoffroy was a young man of noble birth and fortune, and his parents were very anxious that he should marry. Surrounded by the seductions and pleasures of the world, to which his position in society exposed him, he was inspired by grace and a holier vocation, and resisting these allurements, he chose the better part, and entered the priesthood.

He soon acquired, by his activity, intelligence, and integrity, the confidence of his archbishop, Monseigneur Léonard de Trappes, and by him was placed in charge of the temporal affairs of the archdiocese. In the discharge of his functions, Geoffroy visited Garaison some time in the year 1600. Its fame, and the miracles that had been wrought there, were familiar to him, and his soul was

* 'L'auteur du *Chronicon S. Deiparæ Virginis Mariæ*, qui raconte les miracles les plus célèbres accomplis par l'intercession de la Vierge dans tout l'univers, ne manque pas de rapporter l'histoire d'Anglèze de Sagazan; il cite PIERRE GEOFFROY, *Historia B. Virginis Garazoniæ*, et POIRÆUS, *in tripl. Coron. Beatæ Mariæ*, Trait. i. cap. xii. Il ajoute: "*in tot qua et tanta sunt patrata miracula circa ægrotos, ut populus, corrupto vocabulo, eam merito appellavit beatam Virginem Garazonè*," *vulgò* de Garaison, *alias* de Guérison. Cet écrivain a été trompé par une analogie de consonnance, en donnant à cette Vierge le titre de Notre-Dame de *Garaison* ou de Guérison. Ce nom de Garaison était celui des landes où fut construit l'oratoire. Dans une charte d'hommage du duc d'Antin au comte d'Armagnac, à la date du 3 avril 1464, j'ai trouvé mentionnées les terres de Batsera et *Garaison*.'—LAGRÈZE, *Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 215, note.

moved with sorrow at the state of neglect in which he found it.

He was much struck by the natural advantages of the spot as a place of retreat. Far removed from the noise of cities, it presented an aspect of the most profound solitude. On one side it was shut in by two gloomy forests, on the other the mighty Landes separated it from civilised life, so that it seemed well fitted for holy meditation or ascetic contemplation. But when he found that the chapel, which was built on the spot where our Lady had appeared, and confirmed her apparition by many miracles, was in a state of abandonment and neglect, and that there were but five priests to minister to the needs of the pilgrims who continued to visit it, he was touched by regret, and felt within him a secret voice that seemed to call upon him to exercise his influence for its restoration. One difficulty was removed by the death of the Curé of Monléon and his own appointment to the parish. Garaison thus passing under his jurisdiction, allowed him full opportunity to employ his zeal and influence for its advantage.

His first step was to procure an ordonnance from the Archbishop of Auch, declaring the church and monastery of Garaison for ever independent of the parish of Monléon. This was in the year 1608. From thenceforward the service at the chapel was carried on with regularity; several priests constantly attended in the confessionals, and no less than twelve fathers were appointed for the duty of the sanctuary. During the winter season they were occupied in giving missions throughout the neighbouring parishes, but during the summer they remained altogether at the chapel, for the benefit and convenience of the pilgrims. But the greatest difficulty experienced by the fathers was in the correction of the grave abuses which had dishonoured these pilgrimages during the period of their connection with Monléon. Dancing, quarrelling, and drunkenness prevailed so much among those who were attracted to the spot, rather by desire of novelty than by the inspiration of holiness, that the devil had rendered it

a 'fair of debauchery' rather than a retreat of prayer and devotion.*

The zealous fathers set themselves earnestly to work to remedy these disorders, but it required some years of untiring exertion to effect a complete reformation of the evils which had been produced under secular administration. The consuls of Monléon had a bench in the nave of the church, and attended on great festivals in their consular robes. They were allowed to bring with them an armed force to keep order, in consequence of the great affluence of the faithful. The priests were exempted from supporting or lodging soldiers, and the enclosure of Garaison was an asylum in which the servants and attendants of the chapel were free from arrest. There were strict rules, prescribing regulations for innkeepers, butchers, haberdashers, and other tradespeople, drawn there to supply the wants of the crowds that frequented these desert *landes*. There will be found in the Appendix two documents of some interest, having reference to this period of its history.†

Its blessed Patroness had not abandoned her chosen valley, and in due time Garaison again beheld at her feet a prostrate crowd of pious votaries, who came, not occasionally, but daily, to solicit her intercession and protection. In 1626, Pope Urban VIII. granted a Bull, approving the devotion to our Lady of Garaison, and in the same year Louis XIII. granted it a patent of protection. In the words of the Charte, 'Garaison estoit, à cause de la piété du lieu, en la protection et sauvegarde de Louis XIII.'

Godefroy de Rochefort, belonging to one of the most noble and ancient families of France, became one of its most distinguished ornaments. He visited it as a layman

* 'Or ce commencement ne feut pas ny sans incommodité pour les iniures de l'air qu'il leur falut souffrir en vn lieu despourueu de toute habitation, & où tout vn temps quelques ais mal agencés leur seruirent de maison & de couuert, ny sans beaucoup de trauail pour les abus, danses, dissolutions, ieux, yurogneries que le Diable y auoit fait glisser és iours du concours du peuple, faisant d'vn lieu de deuotion vne foire de desbauche, abus qui donnèrent assez & à faire & à pâtir, auant qu'estre arrachez, mais que néanmoins le zèle & la diligence extirpèrent si bien, qu'il n'en reste plus depuis long-temps ny trace ny mémoire.'—*Lys du Val de Guaraison*, ed. 1630. † Appendix D.

during the direction of Pierre Geoffroy, and having remained there for some time in retreat, inspired with a holy vocation, he renounced the world and became a priest. He was celebrated for the taste and talent with which he composed and sang several *cantiques* in honour of our Lady, and also for his enlightenment as a confessor and success as a preacher. He was an eye-witness, and bore testimony to many of the miracles which were operated at Garaison.

Hubert Charpentier, of Meaux, is another of those good ecclesiastics to whose piety and care the chapel of Garaison was indebted. He aided considerably in its restoration, as he was subsequently the great restorer of the devotion at Bétharram. So successful, under the visible assistance of our Lady, were these and many others in their efforts for the glory of Garaison, that the historian pronounces it to have been among the other sanctuaries of the Pyrenees as the lily among the flowers, the mother amongst the daughters. Pilgrimages from distant parts of the kingdom, as well as from the more neighbouring parishes, were frequent, and the records of the monastery, previous to the Revolution, furnished innumerable instances of the miracles of which it had been the scene.

And what had become of Anglèze de Sagazan, the poor shepherdess? She died in 1589, on the vigil of the Nativity of our Lady, in the monastery of Fabas, being over one hundred years of age—an age which it was not uncommon for people to attain in these mountain districts. The Superioress of that convent would willingly have received her gratuitously, had the means of the community permitted; and as her parents were too poor to provide for her support, the authorities of Monléon undertook to pay for her sustenance during her novitiate, and until she should be enabled to become a professed nun.* She lived in that convent as a professed nun for forty-six years,

* She is not forgotten in the Charte of 1537, in which there is the following stipulation: 'Item que la monge demeurant au monastère de Fabas sera faite professe et entretenue aux dépens de ladite chapelle, ainsi qu'il sera admis par ledit recteur, consuls et autres gens de bien.'

during which she edified the community by the purity and sanctity of her life. We are told that her obedience was complete, her simplicity unaffected, her humility profound, and her gentleness unexampled. She was never known upon any occasion to have exhibited the slightest sign of anger or of impatience, and never did a passing sentiment of resentment find its way to her humble heart. Above all things, she was discreet and reserved in regard to the apparition with which she had been favoured; she never spoke of it, nor of the revelation and directions which had accompanied it, unless by the commands of her superiors; in this imitating her divine Patroness, who loved not ostentatiously to divulge the mystery entrusted to her, but rather to preserve and contemplate it silently in her adoring heart.

It was her custom for many years, with the permission of the Superioress, to visit the chapel at Garaison on all the great feasts of our Lady. On these occasions the people flocked around her with insatiable curiosity and veneration, and used to tear off pieces from her habit as precious relics of a saint—which they all considered she must be, to have merited the manifestation of our Lady to her.* Fearing, however, that this personal veneration of the simple people towards her might degenerate into superstition, she limited her visits to one in the year; and ultimately, as much from her own humility as from a prudent prohibition on the part of the abbess, she discontinued them altogether, 'tant par la deffence de son abbesse que par sa propre discrétion et humilité.' She fasted very strictly, especially on Saturday, on which day she was allowed to separate herself from the community, and remain in solitary contemplation alone in her cell.

* 'Elle alla durant plusieurs années és grandes festes de la Vierge à la chapelle de Guaraison par la licence de son Abbesse, licence qu'on accordait plus fréquemment en ce temps-là, la closture n'estant pas si estroite & si serrée. Et plusieurs qui viuent encore, & à qui i'ay parlé, asseurent auoir veu le peuple accourir à grandes foules pour la voir, & luy deschirer ses habits pour en conserver les pièces comme des Reliques, tant elle estoit en réputation de saincteté pour l'apparition de la Vierge qui auoit donné l'origine à ceste célèbre chapelle.'—*Lys du Val de Guaraison*, ed. 1630, p. 167.

It is said that she frequently received heavenly communications, and sometimes visions of the blessed Virgin, which flooded her chamber with rays of light. During the years of her old age, and when she found herself at the point of death, she proclaimed over and over the truth and the facts of the vision and revelation; and she never varied nor hesitated in her account of them.

When the convent was destroyed and ransacked at the period of the Revolution of 1789, a pious lady, Madame Cochierallo, of St. Franjoie, near L'Isle-en-Dodon, in the diocese of Toulouse, was enabled to protect and conceal the remains of the holy shepherdess. Having devoutly kept them during a period of forty years, she bequeathed them at her death to her daughter, Madame Figarol. This lady, not thinking it suitable that such holy relics should remain in the casual custody of any lay person, resolved to offer them to Garaison; whither on June 5, 1838, they were brought, accompanied by a magnificent procession and the acclamation and rejoicings of the grateful people. The skeleton is in complete preservation, and is deposited under the special care of the Father Superior, who keeps the key of the sarcophagus in which it rests.

I now pass over long years of pilgrimages, of miracles, and of popular devotion, until the tempest of the Revolution broke upon Garaison in all its fury. Its altars were overturned, its church despoiled, its doors closed, its priests banished, and its possessions sold for the benefit of the national exchequer. The sacred vessels, valuable ornaments, silver lamps, costly jewels, and rich *ex-votos*, memorials of favours, spiritual or corporal, received through our Lady's intervention, were carried off. The church was hideously desecrated, its carved stalls and noble statues given to the flames. The archives of the monastery also were destroyed, and many interesting documents were lost to history. The farm and church of Garaison were purchased by a private individual. The convent and chapel fell into ruin; and that sterile valley,

on which the culture of Mary had bestowed so much renown and animation, again reverted to its former gloom and destitution, disturbed occasionally by the rare visit of some pious pilgrim, who came to pray and weep at its abandoned shrine.

After forty years of lonely abandonment, Monseigneur Double, urged by the calls of the people, took steps to re-establish the pilgrimage. In 1834 he repurchased the church and its dependencies from M. Nogues, whose family had acquired them at the Revolution. This restoration was celebrated with all the pomp and rejoicing which the Church displays upon her great festivals; and with return to the honour of our blessed Lady came back all its former piety and renown. The bishop founded there, in 1840, a house for the residence of missionary priests, and an asylum for aged or infirm ecclesiastics.

This sanctuary, even in these days, is one of the most celebrated in the Pyrenees, perhaps with the exception of that of Lourdes. 'There are three shrines,' writes Molinier in his time, 'which enjoy great reputation in this district—those of Bétharram, Buglose, and Verdalay in the Bordelais, all of which may be regarded as the offspring of Garaison; not, indeed, in what concerns the style and architecture of the chapel, which is very ancient, but in the devotion and exercises which have been derived from her example.' This is the testimony of two hundred and thirty-nine years ago; to-day, the more modern sanctuary, under the direction of the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, established by Monseigneur Laurence, has regained its ancient celebrity, and is daily visited by devout pilgrims from all quarters, including the distant shores of heterodox England and of faithful Ireland.

Here my quaint friend, the Abbé Poiré, furnishes me with an abridgment of the history of Garaison, which, as in the case of Bétharram, I offer to my readers as the compendium of this chapter. He commences his brief graphic sketches of the sanctuaries of the blessed Virgin in France with Garaison, and writes of it as follows:—

"I will begin by our Lady of Garazon, or Guérison, which is at six leagues from Tarbes, chief town of the province of Bigorre, on the frontier of Bearn, in the diocese of Auch. It is almost one hundred and twenty years since the first foundations of it were laid; and it is handed down from father to son that the occasion was that which I am going to relate. A little girl of twelve years old, who was minding sheep on a common (*lande*), in the middle of which the chapel was afterwards built, was sitting by a fountain, which at present is covered by a handsome semi-dome, close to the foot of the high altar, when the Mother of God appeared to her and commanded her to direct her father to tell the consuls of Mont-Léon, a town situated about a league from thence, to build a church in her honour on the spot in which she was speaking. The child was not so bewildered as not to be able to answer that she would do so willingly, provided she would mind her bread and little bag, while she went quickly to deliver the message. The Mother of Goodness having accepted the condition, she ran off to her father; and the good man, no less simple than his daughter, believing at once what she told him, went to give these orders to the consuls, who at first sent him rudely about his business. On this rebuff, he had recourse to his daughter, who had gone back to the fields, and having told her what had passed, the child reported it to the Mother of God, who charged her anew with the same commission. But the little girl was not in such a hurry to discharge it as not to find time to look after her bag and her bread, that she might give some of it to her father, who had asked for a morsel. Moreover, this act would seem to have been inspired by an especial providence of God, wishing to make her father witness and publisher (*trompette*) of the marvel that had taken place, for, instead of the piece of brown bread that she had left, she found a beautiful white loaf. All transported with delight, she took it to her father; and he, without tasting it, took it straight away to the consuls. The report of the miracle having

been spread through the entire town, the Curé of Mont-Léon impressed upon the consuls the danger that they would incur if they should reject the honour and favour which the Queen of Heaven offered to their city. Having taken his own resolution, he went with the intention to plant the cross on the spot where the Mother of God had manifested herself to the little girl, and where, through the contributions of devout persons, at first a little chapel was built, and afterwards a very handsome church. The miracles which were, and continue to be, performed there—notably the sudden cures of persons sick or afflicted by bodily ailments—were such, and of so great a number, that the place was named Our Lady of *Guérison* (or healing), which, in the corrupt jargon of the country, is called *Garazon.*' * The original of the foregoing will be found in the Appendix.†

The miraculous history of our lady of Garaison is written on the vestibule of the church in a series of most curious pictures. In point of art they cannot boast much merit; in point of antiquity, and as local records of authenticated miracles, they are very precious. They are no less than sixty-seven in number, and, as illustration, I will transcribe a few of the miracles which this novel volume recites, and refer my readers for more detailed accounts to the edition of the 'Lys de Garaison' edited and enlarged by the present fathers of Garaison.‡

The three first pictures represent the three apparitions of the blessed Virgin to Anglèze de Sagazan. Number ten represents a Huguenot, with three assistants, endeavouring to consume by fire the miraculous image of our Lady. During the troubles of the League, Captain de Sus, whose name had acquired a terrible celebrity, surprised the chapel of Garaison and set his soldiers at once to pillage everything. Finding that the statue of our Lady was not of metal, and useful for bullets, but simply of wood, they

* *La triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, par Père Poiré, tom. i. p. 279. (1630.)

† Appendix E.

‡ 'A Garaison, au bureau du sacristain. 1861.'

threw it into a fire that they had lighted for the purpose. The fire burned for three hours, but when it had been extinguished the statue was found untouched by the flames. Molinier asserts that he received this account from one who had been a witness of it, and who was one of those who had assisted in withdrawing it.*

Number eleven represents a merchant of Toulouse in a penitential garment, with the inscription, 'Contrition extraordinaire en 1608.' A man who had abandoned himself during many years to a life of disorder, by chance took up the account of the miracles wrought at Garaison, and was induced by curiosity to read it. This caused him to reflect seriously, whereupon he took the resolution of making an effort to change his life, and engaged to the blessed Virgin, if he obtained the grace of conversion, to visit her chapel in the habit of a pilgrim, with naked feet, upon his knees, and holding a lighted taper. He instantly obtained the grace for which he sought; his heart melted with compunction, his will became resolute and firm, he was enabled to overcome his evil propensities, and the scandals of his past life were forgotten in the completeness of his penitence.

Number thirteen represents a young girl being saved from drowning. In 1605, a girl about eleven years of age, called Peyronne Tajan, of Arné, was crossing upon a single plank the river of Gers, swollen by recent rains; a squall of wind, striking her, precipitated her into the river, but uplifting her hands and heart, she invoked the aid of our Lady of Garaison, and the wave, which seemed about to swallow her, bore her gently and safely, as if in a skiff, to the bank. She herself recounted the event to the historian Molinier, who narrates it in his picturesque style. He adds, 'Tous ceux du pays tesmoignent ceste merveille d'une commune voix, et moy-mesme estant sur le lieu, i'ay esté curieux de parler à ceste femme, la vingtvniesme année après la chose aduenue, et elle m'a raconté

* 'Celuy qui m'a raconté la merveuille pour l'auoir veuë, m'a protesté qu'il fust l'un de ceux qui tirèrent l'image du feu.'—*Val de Lys*, p. 348. (1630.)

le faict, auec les mesmes circonstances que l'escrit faict depuis si longtemps, pertout sans aucune variation.'*

Number fourteen is extremely interesting, as being a representation of the old chest which Anglèze found miraculously filled with white bread. Number twenty represents the history of a woman miraculously saved from destruction by a fall of snow. In the month of March 1609, a terrific avalanche overwhelmed the village of Daulong, in the valley of Aure. All the houses were destroyed, and the inhabitants buried under their ruins. It was one general cemetery, their very houses becoming the tombs of the unhappy occupants. A girl of the name of Jeannette Marsan invoked the protection of our Lady of Garaison at that extreme moment; but the house which she inhabited shared the fate of its neighbours, while she herself was rescued. She remained under the snow from Saturday until the following Tuesday, when she was brought out alive and well.

Number forty-two represents a truly singular incident, that of a man saved from the hands of the common hangman. A man named Postal, of Toulouse, was taken prisoner by the Huguenots during the wars of religion, as they were called. They did not immediately put him to death, nor would they accept any ransom for him, but determined to satiate their vengeance upon him by hanging him on the gallows-tree in the most public manner. The gibbet was erected, the rope prepared, the ladder put up, and the prisoner tremblingly mounted the scaffold. What hope of life in this extremity could there be for the doomed man? He thought of Mary, and fervently invoked her aid; while his mother, weeping in the crowd, made a vow to our Lady of Garaison, imploring her protection for her unhappy son. The twofold prayer and vow were heard; the rope broke, and the condemned stood unhurt upon the ground. The executioner and spectators were struck with astonishment, and, attributing the accident to chance, the hangman recommenced his work. Again the rope was

* *Lys de Garaison*, p. 379.

fastened round the prisoner's neck, and again for the second time it broke, and the executioner found his bloody science baffled. But the spectators, who were Huguenots, could not regard this occurrence as a miraculous intervention, and they accused the executioner of incapacity, or of connivance with the Catholics. And then, for the third time, the fatal noose was tied with redoubled care, and for the third time the rope broke, and the executioner was driven away in anger and shame at the failure of his horrid office. Finally, the condemned man, through the influence of a person present, who had been sensibly impressed by the thrice-repeated failure of punishment, obtained a reprieve, was pardoned, and enabled to repair to Garaison to offer his thanksgiving. Molinier, who gives these details, states that he heard the story from Postal himself.

Many of the miracles which have been recorded by Molinier were attributed to the waters of the fountain, and others, again, to the prayers recited before the ancient statue of our Lady, whose preservation from the fire has been already recounted. Of the fountain, Molinier writes: 'The power of curing corporeal maladies, which the blessed Virgin conferred upon the waters of this fountain at the period of her apparition, typifies the marvellous results which the waters of grace effect, in this same spot, in the recovery of infirm souls, who flock hither from all sides in search of a remedy for their spiritual diseases. The virtue of this water comes from heaven. ("La vertu de ceste eau vient du ciel.") It derives its power from the favour of the blessed Virgin, and it is through her intercession that it has its efficacy, and that grace is so abundantly communicated to the soul in this spot.' Speaking of the statue of our Lady, he informs us that he had made careful enquiry into its history and origin, but that he had failed to ascertain anything certain about it; some reporting that it was the blessed Virgin herself who directed the shepherdess to its discovery, and others saying that it had been found accidentally among the briers.

He tells us that the diversity of opinion on the matter was so great as to invest it with much mystery, which rendered the tradition the more venerable. He adds that whatever uncertainty may exist regarding its origin, there is none as to the wonderful effects which have been produced through its agency; and he concludes by comparing its healing power to that of the brazen serpent in the desert, the sight of which was sufficient to cure inveterate wounds, and infuse consolation and courage into the hearts of the wandering Israelites.

These prodigies never have entirely ceased. In 1844, Madame Ferdinande Guilhez, of Paris, had been a sufferer, during fifteen years, from a malady which had caused her great torture, and which nothing had been able to assuage. She had consulted the first physicians in Paris, she had visited most of the medicinal springs in France and abroad, without finding relief to her pains. She came to the Pyrenees, and there she heard of our Lady of Garaison, and of the wonderful cures that had been effected through her intercession. Full of faith, and sincerely inspired with devotion to Mary, Madame Guilhez determined to make a pilgrimage to Garaison; and on the vigil of the feast of Corpus-Christi, June 9, 1844, she arrived at the hôtel of M. Nogues, accompanied by her physician. On the evening of the same day she was carried to the church and went to confession. The next morning, at 5 A.M., she heard Mass, offered for her intention, and received holy Communion with great fervour. At the moment that she received Communion, her pains and convulsions ceased altogether, and from that moment forward she was in a condition to perform all her domestic duties with her former activity and energy. She has written an account of her cure in a letter addressed to the Superior of Garaison, which will be found in the additions published to the 'Lys du Val.'

Nor has the beneficent power of our Lady of Garaison been unexercised in our days. Very recently, a noble family of the neighbourhood hung up an ex-voto in

acknowledgment of a miraculous favour received in the cure of one of its children, and similar instances are constantly experienced at this altar, although not generally made public.

Our holy father, Pius IX., in his zeal for religion, conceived the desire of conferring a new glory upon Garaison by the public coronation of the statue of our Lady. This interesting ceremony took place on Sunday, September 17, 1864. The Archbishop of Toulouse, with six bishops, those of Tarbes, Bayonne, Pamiers, Soissons, Auch, and Aire, attended. A hundred priests assisted in the confessionals, and twelve thousand people received holy Communion. The crown was placed on the head of the statue by the venerable hands of the bishop of the diocese, while the choir executed the *Te Deum* with an enthusiasm and *ensemble* that elevated all hearts. When the ceremony had concluded, and the immense multitude was still loitering about the courts and gardens, a man, clad in a rough brown habit, with flowing beard, and countenance radiant with holy fervour, mounted upon the edge of the marble fountain. It was the well-known Capuchin Father Marie-Antoine. In trembling accents he cried out, 'Come, my friends, let us all once more sing the praise of Mary!' ('Allons, mes amis, chantons les louanges de Marie!'), and all, men, women, soldiers, priests, of one accord, intoned the hymn of our Lady of Garaison; while the band of the Artillery took up and prolonged the strains of the devout chorus. 'My friends,' he cried, 'all hail to Mary! All hail to our Lady of Garaison! Long live Pius the Ninth! Long live our lords the bishops!' ('Mes amis, vive Marie! Vive Notre-Dame de Garaison! Vive Pie IX! Vivent nos seigneurs les évêques!') And the entire people repeated the cry, making the valley of Garaison ring once again with the old words, ever ancient, ever new, of simple piety and holy faith. The journals of the day* gave a glowing description of the fervour of the spectators and of the splendour of the ceremonies, which

* See *Le Monde* especially.

left an impression upon those who witnessed them that recalled the memories of its holiest times.

There is a large seminary attached to Garaison for the education of ecclesiastical students. I assisted at evening prayers, and was much edified in hearing the Litany of Loretto sung in chorus by those manly voices, in that venerable chapel, consecrated by so many traditions and miracles. I heard them again at an early Mass at 5 A.M. on the following morning, and their voice of prayer still rings in my ears as I write these recollections. I left the valley of Garaison and its 'lily' with pious regret. The rising sun was reddening with a light that seemed to emanate from the divine hand, as on Creation's great

NOTRE-DAME DE GARAISON.

Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.
Vous qu'en ces lieux amène la souffrance,
Bons pèlerins,
Accablés de chagrins,
Pour que vos cœurs s'ouvrent à l'espérance,
Dans ce séjour
Dites avec amour,
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

De l'homme juste et de l'homme coupable,
Du haut des cieux,
Elle exhauce les vœux.
Il lui suffit que l'on soit misérable
Pour accueillir
Ceux qu'elle entend gémir.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

dawn; the long line of snow-capped mountains, which offers such a magnificent spectacle from the heights of Lannemezan, extending from the distant Monné in the glowing East to the lofty Pic de Gourzy in the hazy West.

Such a journey and such a pilgrimage are like an old illuminated prayer-book; their aspect and their memory direct to heaven and wean from earth. With this thought in my mind, and the hymn of our Lady of Garaison upon my lips, I once more found myself encircled by the frivolities and cares of a traveller's weary life; relieved by the hope that this pilgrimage may have brightened my soul with a ray not less radiant, but more enduring, than that which was then glimmering upon the Pyrenean peaks.

OUR LADY OF GARAISON.

Pour forth an orison
To our Lady of Garaison.
All you, who in suffering and pain,
Pilgrims of grief,
Come here for relief,
If you wish that your hopes mayn't be vain,
In this retreat
Often repeat,
With love, an orison
To the Maid of Garaison!

Of the just, of the sinner, the same,
From heaven on high
She lists to the sigh:
'Tis enough, her protection to claim,
That suffering or woe
Should shadow the brow.
Then pour forth an orison
To our Lady of Garaison!

Vous que chérit sa tendre bienveillance,
Petits enfants,
Offrez-lui votre encens ;
En vous voyant elle sourit d'avance.
Que votre cœur
La prie avec ferveur.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

Quand les transports et la fougue de l'âge
Contre vos sens
Vous rendront impuissants,
Si vous craignez un funeste naufrage,
Dans le danger,
Sans vous décourager,
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

En vain sur vous se déchaîne l'orage,
En vain les airs
Sont sillonnés des éclairs ;
Des aquilons elle apaise la rage,
Et sur les flots
Soutient les matelots.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

Elle est pour nous cette brillante étoile,
Qui dans la nuit
Vers la porte nous conduit.
De vents heureux elle enfle notre voile,
Et son secours
Assure tous nos jours.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

Elle est encore la meilleure des mères,
Et, dans ce lieu,
Elle obtient tout de Dieu.
Pour qu'elle soit sensible à nos misères,
Qu'ici nos voix
L'implorent à la fois.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

Angel-like childhood, that fondly she loves,
In sweet innocence
Offer incense,
For she smiles as to meet you she moves.
Then, from your heart,
Send, like a dart,
A grateful orison
To the Star of Garaison!

When the passionate transports of youth
Render it vain
To curb or restrain
The senses, by reason or truth;
When shipwreck seems near,
Do not doubt, do not fear,
But put up an orison
To our Lady of Garaison!

The tempest may threaten around,
The lightnings flash,
The torrents dash,
And the thunder in volleys resound;
The sailor she'll save
From the wild wave,
Who pours forth an orison
To Her of Garaison!

She is the star that, brightly glowing
In the dark night,
Conducts us right,
Fair breezes o'er our sail-yards blowing
Her help restores
Our native shores.
Then say an orison
To our Lady of Garaison!

She is a mother the fondest, the best.
In this dear place
There is no grace
Her Son will refuse to those she has blessed.
Then let each voice
Sing loud and rejoice,
As we chant an orison
To our Lady of Garaison!

Prosternons-nous devant ses tabernacles,
Et ses faveurs,
Pénétreront nos cœurs.
Le pèlerin, sauvé par ses miracles,
A Garaison
Devra sa guérison.
Dites, dites une oraison
A la Vierge de Garaison.

M. Dupaty.

Then, prostrate in homage, her favours we crave:
At this loved shrine
Our hearts incline,
And, pilgrims, acknowledge the mercies that save.
Our mis'ries she'll heal,
As lowly we kneel,
And pour forth our orison
To our Lady of Garaison!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF SARRANCE.

OUR LADY OF SARRANCE.

(Val d'Aspe.)

A bostes pès, ô boune Bierge,
Lou péléri qu'éy prousternat;
Sus boste aütaà qué brûle à cierge
Qué lou sou cô p'a présentat;
Tout en plouran dab aboundance
Qu'ésp ditz sa péne y soun chégri:
Ah! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Escoutat plaà lou péléri.

Cantique.

'Que les bontés de la Vierge Marie continuent à se répandre sur la chapelle de Sarrance et sur tous ceux qui la visitent.'—*Chronique de Sarrance.*

An exquisite softness was tinting the foliage with beautiful autumnal variety, as I drove one morning in October along the skirts of the Pyrenees from 'peerless Pau' to Oloron-Ste.-Marie. The vineyards, which produce the fine Jurançon wine, were still dark with their clustering grapes; the tall Lombardy poplars, clad in glowing yellow as if in half mourning for the departed summer, were waving to the breeze by many a river-bank, while the crimson fern was spread over the hill-sides like a carpet of rich Persian pattern. A more lovely, or a more pictorial combination of colour, light and shade, could not be seen than was presented by the landscape along the highly cultivated and diversified country between Gan and Oloron. At our left rose the glorious Pyrenean range, already hoary with the first snow-fall; on the right lay undulating valleys and graceful mamelons, peopled by a laborious, prosperous race, and studded with comfortable homesteads and pleasant villas. It was market-day at Oloron; the large

square was full of cattle, of that superior breed for which the pasturages of the Val d'Aspe are famous, and of a sturdy-looking class of farmers, of a better type than that which I had seen at Lannemezan—the stout Basque of the plain endeavouring to drive hard bargains with the acute Béarnais of the mountain.

Oloron and Ste. Marie constitute two separate towns, united by a bridge over the Gave d'Oloron. The position is good in a military point of view; Oloron lying in a gorge, and Ste. Marie standing upon an elevation above it, while it commands a fine view of the mountains to the south. It formerly was a bishop's see, but now belongs to the diocese of Bayonne. Its church, that of the Holy Cross, was built in 1080. The name of the bishop who then occupied the see, AMATUS, may still be seen engraved on one of the capitals in the transept. The church possesses no architectural merit, and is gloomy and ill-kept. It was, however, the scene of some disastrous occurrences during the evil days of Jeanne d'Albrecht. It was in this church that Bishop Roussel, while pretending to be a Catholic, sought to undermine the religious principles of his flock by preaching the doctrines of the Reformation. He administered the Communion in both kinds, inveighed against transubstantiation, and celebrated Mass in a fashion of his own, which he called the Mass of seven points or parts.

The church of Ste. Marie possesses much interest for the archæologist. Its architecture is a compound of all styles, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, having undergone repeated mutilations and reparations during the civil wars that desolated Bearn. The great entrance is ornamented by sculpture, representing the capture of certain Moors by the princes of Bearn, the twenty-four works of the Calendar, and the twenty-four ancients of the Apocalypse. Oloron and Ste. Marie were distinguished throughout the 'wars of religion' for the steadfastness with which they adhered to the Catholic faith; and we are told by Poëydavant, an historian as remarkable for the

impartiality of his recital as for the freshness and elegance of his style, that in this respect Oloron formed an exception to most other Bearnese cities, in which too many succumbed before the terrors of persecution and the seductions of corruption.*

The object of my journey led me to the mountains, and after a rapid survey of Oloron, I was soon on the road to Sarrance, which is seventeen kilomètres distant. The road at first faces the rude hills of St. Christau, pursuing its way through the village of Asasp into the Val d'Aspe through a picturesque chain of hills, intersected by verdant plains, watered by the babbling stream that gives its name to this delicious valley. Two roads lead out of Oloron to the south: one on the right of the Gave d'Oloron—and this was the line of the ancient Roman road to Spain—the other on the left, both uniting at the foot of the PÈNE D'ESCOT, an enormous rock that stands like a sentinel to guard the entrance of the pass. At the foot of this rock there still may be read a Latin inscription, which is attributed to the time of Cæsar:—

L. VAL VERNUS CER
II VIR BIS HANC
VIAM RESTITUIT. * * * * *

The aspect of this rock is very grand; its lonely savage character is relieved by a small oratory that is placed at its foot at the angle of the bridge, inviting the traveller to raise his heart in praise to the Creator as he gazes upon his mighty works. At this spot the scene altogether changes, the horizon becomes narrowed, and for seven or eight kilomètres the way is through a dark defile. A number of small cascades (*cascatelle*) interrupt the progress of the turbulent stream, which runs so close to the road that it seems to dispute with it the passage through the hills, until suddenly turning a sharp angle, one finds oneself at the entrance of a small, quiet, modest village. This is SARRANCE, which borrows its name, in

* 'Il faut en excepter la ville d'Oloron, où la foi catholique fut presque toujours dominante.'—*Troubles du Béarn*, tom. i. p. 248.

the Béarnais dialect, from the physical conformation of the spot—*sarrade*, narrow; and *ance*, passage. Previous to the establishment of the pilgrimage, Sarrance was one of the most desolate spots in the canton, and was known only as a place of summer grazing for the cattle of the valley. But now its appearance has become transformed; agriculture covers its sides with abundant crops, presenting a most agreeable landscape, prairies and fields creeping up to the highest peaks. There are four hamlets—*Ichère*, *Géy*, *Boscdapous*, *Sayquet*—hanging upon its flanks or ensconced in its ravines, occupied by a numerous population of shepherds, whose patriarchal habits are characterised by much gentleness and simplicity.

One is astonished to learn that a population of over thirteen hundred souls exists in a situation naturally so wild and barren, until one reflects upon what the piety of a people can effect; and then astonishment ceases, and gives way to admiration. Sarrance is the most ancient sanctuary in the Pyrenees, and, accordingly, it is here that M. de Lagrèze commences his edifying visits and begins his interesting book, to which I shall frequently refer with profit and gratification. According to Father Lassalle,* one of its earlier historians, Sarrance has been a place of pilgrimage for more than a thousand years, that is to say, from the eighth century; but there are others, and among them the learned Father Poiré,† who place its foundation in the twelfth century, when the Catholic world began to recover from the terrible convulsions of the period.

The chapel and monastery stand upon an elevation at the southern extremity, and at once attract the traveller's eye as he enters the village. The approach to them is by a narrow street. As I passed along in the evening time the women were sitting at their doors spinning and gossiping; they saluted me as I went by, and the little children that I met returning from school doffed

* *Orig. de la dévotion de N.-D. de Sarrance.*
† *Triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge.*

their caps with much grace and affability, as though it was their custom to hail with reverence all those who come as pilgrims to their shrine. At the end of the street there is a fountain and a grass-grown square. At one side of the square there are some untenanted houses that had belonged formerly to the convent, and were used for the reception of strangers; at the opposite side are the monastery and the church. There was an air of neglect and chilliness about the spot which little accorded with the impression that I had brought of its former importance, but which amply testified the vicissitudes through which it had passed.

I rang the bell at the door of the monastery, and it was opened by a venerable-looking ecclesiastic. I asked to see the Superior, and was told that he was absent, but the father added that he would be happy to supply his place in any manner that I might desire. 'Are you a tourist?' he enquired. 'No!' I replied. 'I am an Irishman and a Catholic, and have come to venerate our Lady of Sarrance.' 'As a pilgrim?' he rejoined. 'You look like one!' ('Êtes-vous touriste?' 'Non! Je suis Irlandais, catholique, et je viens pour vénérer Notre-Dame de Sarrance.' 'En pèlerin? Vous en avez l'air!') I acknowledge that I felt profoundly touched by this recognition; and standing for a few minutes in the shade of that crumbling cloister, Father L. QUINTA and I became as familiar and cordial acquaintances, through the Masonic introduction of that Catholic fraternity which I had already felt at Garaison, as if we had been known to each other throughout our lives.

Our first visit was to the church. That which existed in the middle ages, and had been remarkable for the beauty of its architecture, was destroyed, and the very walls razed to the ground, by the implacable Huguenots. In the seventeenth century a new church was built upon its ruins, in the ornate style of the Renaissance; and this too was despoiled and devastated by anti-Catholic fury. The high altar, with its pillars and statues; the two side

altars with their costly decorations; the priceless paintings, with which the walls were covered, were ruthlessly delivered to the flames, and Sarrance was once more a place of desolation and mourning. The loss suffered by this spoliation was estimated at more than a hundred thousand francs! The organ, the pulpit, and the sacristy are all that now remain of this second church and its valuable treasures.

Although the present church is deficient in architectural beauty, its exterior produces a picturesque effect. It is surrounded by an ungainly spire, with eight curvilinear fronts or faces; it has three stories, in which are eight windows, and is covered by a dome, surrounded by tasteless statues of the blessed Virgin, the four Evangelists, St. Peter, and St. Paul. There is a nave with side aisles, and several lateral chapels; the architecture is in the style of the seventeenth century, and is not unpleasing. The high altar is very plain; behind it are some modern stained windows, which present a very devotional effect as one enters the nave. Above it, formerly, was placed a little tribune, in which reposes the miraculous statue of our Lady. But much inconvenience in discharging the usual functions was experienced from the crowd that constantly came to pray before it, and in consequence it has been removed to one of the side chapels, dedicated to St. Norbert, the patron of the parish. I could not but regret that this change had been made, and that it should have been removed, through any secondary consideration, from its ancient position, in which it had long received the veneration of countless pilgrims.

The statue, which is of stone and of very uncouth workmanship, is now placed upon an altar, covered by an arch, at the right hand side of the chapel of St. Norbert. The body of the figure is enshrined in a glass casing, with the exception of the feet up to the knees, which, as well as the face, are uncovered. The knees are worn by the constant salutations of the faithful; the head is black, and the features rough and unfinished. The head was mutilated by

an accident during the Revolution, and the face much injured: a village mason undertook to replace it, and with the labour of one night chiselled a new head, executed with much piety, but with small appreciation of ideal beauty. There is no doubt as to the antiquity and authenticity of the remaining parts of this statue. At each side of it are bas-reliefs, the figures being almost the size of life, representing the fisherman and shepherd on the bank of the river, and the discovery of the statue by the bull. Father Lassalle tells us 'that nobody has been able to ascertain the material of which the image is composed. It is doubtless the work of God, before which human intelligence must bow itself down.'* It is now, however, recognised to be of stone; but of a nature and quality quite different from any found in the mountains about Sarrance.

On the western side of the church is the cloister; a small court, carpeted with verdure and flowers, extends beneath two peristyles, placed one over the other, supported by plain round arches, and covered by a roof shaped like a pavilion. Several cells open upon both sides of the upper gallery, looking out upon a scene of surpassing loneliness and great solitude. Nothing could invite meditation more than this dilapidated cloister, and as my venerable guide recounted to me its vicissitudes, I appreciated the strength of that faith whose memories uphold and console in proportion as the world and its masters endeavour to overthrow and contemn.

The first vestiges of devotion to Notre-Dame de Sarrance may be traced to a very remote period; but so far as documentary evidence is concerned, little assistance is to be found. I will recount the legend of its origin in the language of Father Lassalle, and leave my readers to attach to it that credit which they may deem proper. It resembles that which they will find later at Buglose, and possesses a local

* 'Personne n'a pu connaître de quelle matière l'image est composée: c'est sans doute l'ouvrage de Dieu, devant lequel doit s'abîmer l'intelligence humaine.'—P. LASSALLE.

colouring that will not be without its charm, even for those who may be the least inclined to believe.

'Sarrance was nothing better than a desert common, whither the inhabitants of Bédous were used to send their cattle for summer pasturage. One of the herdsmen observed that the bull frequently separated himself from the rest of the herd, while he improved considerably in condition, from which he concluded that he must have found out some spot where the grass was better and kinder. He therefore determined to watch him closely, and upon the next occasion, having followed him, he saw him kneel down upon a stone on the banks of the Gave. Near the place there was a fisherman belonging to the valley, and he called him, when they both approached the bull, and, to their astonishment, beheld a small statue of the blessed Virgin, half hid in the gurgling waters of the limpid stream. The news was communicated to the neighbourhood, and the people flocked from all parts to see the wonder ("la merveilleuse apparition"). The Curé of Bédous reported the circumstance to the Bishop of Oloron, who immediately repaired to the spot, accompanied by his chapter. He had the statue removed to his cathedral, escorted by an imposing procession; but in a few days afterwards it disappeared, and was again found on the same stone by the bank of the Gave, near which it had been discovered by the bull. This was received by the bishop as a divine indication of the desire of the blessed Virgin that a chapel should be erected in her honour at Sarrance, and accordingly a small oratory was constructed there.

'Unbelievers and scoffers have existed at all periods, and such were not wanting even at Sarrance. These heartless profaners carried off the sacred image from its altar, and flung it into a deep hole or gulph under the bridge, in the expectation that it would be borne away by the foaming torrent, and thus for ever lost to the veneration of the people. But their impiety was frustrated, and great was their terror when they saw it ascend the Gave,

against the current, and return to the place from which it had been taken. This miracle produced its natural effect upon the people, and from that day forward they have continued to come in crowds to the sanctuary of OUR LADY OF SARRANCE.'*

On the spot where the image was found by the bull there now stands a small pedestal in marble, and on it may be read the inscription:—

ICI FUT TROUVÉE LA STATUE VÉNÉRÉE DE LA VIERGE.

Near the spot, which is under a high bank on the stony border of the river, there stands a little chapel, where the legend is recorded in relievo; it is known as the chapel of *Notre-Dame de la Pierre.* Father Lassalle tells us that, in his time, wonderful effects were produced through the medium of this stone. It was especially remarkable for its virtue in facilitating the pains of childbirth; and it was stated to him, by persons worthy of credit, that many women, who had suffered prolonged labour during several days, had been instantly relieved upon swallowing a particle of this stone, diluted in some liquid. Although it was the custom of devout people to break off a morsel of this stone and take it away, it never diminished; and while huge rocks and boulders have been carried away by the sudden inundations that render the Gave so destructive, this has never been moved an inch from its position.†

For a period of two hundred years the sanctuary of Sarrance was served by secular priests from Bédous; but in 1340 the bishop gave the direction of the chapel to the order of the Premonstratensians from St.-Jean-de-Castille, in the diocese of Aire. A canon regular, called Brother Raymond, took possession of it under the title of Commander of the Chapel and Hospital of Our Lady of Sarrance; other friars joined him. They observed the rule of St. Augustine and St. Norbert, wore a white habit with the scapular, and founded a priory close to the chapel of the blessed Virgin. Their special mission was

* *Chronique de Sarrance*, p. 9. † Appendix F.

the extension of devotion towards our Lady, while preaching and prayer constituted their alternate occupations. To these they added, at Sarrance, the practice of another good work, which was of great benefit in a country so uncultivated and remote from towns; they enlarged the hospice that had been established by the Bishop of Oloron, and therein afforded hospitality not only to the pilgrims, but to all travellers who journeyed to or from Spain through their valley.

This practice was not uncommon in Bearn at that period. From the reign of Gaston IV., who was distinguished in the first Crusade, there existed many hospitals of this description at Mifaget, Aubertin, Gabas, and St. Christau. These were subject to the mother hospital of Ste. Christine, on the frontier of Aragon, and were served by the friars regular of St. Augustin. Thus, in those early days, did the Pyrenees set the example of that Christian hospitality which, in later years, has been so beautifully imitated by the monks of St. Bernard on the summit of the Alps. How different was Catholic provision in the 'ages of faith' from that which is offered to the traveller in these days of enlightenment and railway expedition! The hospitable monastery is replaced by the modern hotel; and where he formerly was received with gratuitous accommodation, he is now fleeced with unscrupulous extortion. And what has humanity or civilisation gained by the exchange?

Several favours were conceded to the congregation of Sarrance by different Popes. Innocent II., in 1140, granted them great privileges, especially to those among them who consecrated their lives to the distribution of alms ('communi vita viventibus, de faciendis eleemosinis et exhibenda hospitalitate'). The priory soon became one of the most distinguished in France, and its wealth increased with its celebrity. On one occasion three sovereigns met there as pilgrims—the King of Aragon, the King of Navarre, and the Sovereign of Bearn. But this was before the invention of the rights of man and the

discovery of universal suffrage! These illustrious pilgrims made rich offerings—ornaments as remarkable for their workmanship as they were prized for their value; and the King of Navarre caused a suite of apartments to be built for himself, which he might inhabit whenever he felt disposed to devote a few days to retirement and meditation. Matthieu, Count of Foix, granted to the cattle of the convent of Sarrance free passage through his territory, without payment of toll or dues, and he allowed them, further, the privilege of grazing upon his pasturages. They derived a considerable revenue from the mountains which they possessed in the valley, under the jurisdiction and belonging to the communes of Etsaut, Cette, and Urdos.

But the most remarkable pilgrimage of those ancient days was that made by the celebrated Louis XI. · In 1465, Louis XI., as the chronicle tells us, 'vint en pèlerinage à Sarrance.' His taste for pilgrimages is well known; and the readers of Sir Walter Scott, who may not be well versed in mediæval lore, will remember the devotional eccentricities of this monarch, as described in 'Quentin Durward.' He was at Bayonne in 1463, with the object of establishing peace between the sovereigns of Castile and Aragon; and feigning, according to the expression of Étienne Pasquier, 'to be full of religion and piety, he made them pray rather for the preservation of his life than of his soul.'* Attracted by the renown of Notre-Dame de Sarrance, Louis entered Bearn as a simple pilgrim, laid aside his kingly state and dignity, caused to be lowered the sword of royalty which was always carried before him when in his own kingdom, and in humble supplication besought the intercession of Her before whom crowned heads as well as peasant hearts have, in all Christian times, bent in reverential homage.

We are told, in that questionable production of Margaret of Navarre, called the 'Heptaméron,' how a widow lady, of much sense and experience, called Oisille, unde-

* 'Il faisait contenance d'être plein de religion et de piété, et faisait plus prier pour la conservation de sa vie que pour celle de son âme.'

terred by the badness of the roads, came for consolation to our Lady of Sarrance. 'She was not so superstitious,' she writes, 'as to think that the glorious Virgin could leave the right hand of her Son, at which she is seated, in order to come and dwell in a desert land; but she desired to see the holy place, of which she had heard so much said; besides, she felt certain that if there were any means of escaping danger, the monks would find it. Passing through strange places, and most difficult to ascend and descend, so that, notwithstanding her age and weight, she was obliged to perform most of the journey on foot, she succeeded in arriving there. But the misfortune was that the greater number of her attendants and their horses were left dead on the road; and she reached Sarrance with only one man and one maid, and was charitably received there by the religious.' Margaret of Navarre herself visited Sarrance, and she has left us a notice of it in this same work. When leaving St. Savin, on her journey from Cauterets to Pau, she tells us that 'the abbot supplied them with the best horses that could be found in Lavédan, with good Bearnese cloaks, with plenty of provisions, and agreeable companions to conduct them in safety over the mountains, which they traversed more on foot than on horseback, until after much toil and sweat they arrived at Our Lady of Sarrance, where they were received hospitably by the abbot, who, although a bad man, dared not refuse them accommodation, through fear of the sovereign of Bearn, by whom he knew they were much esteemed.' ('Car l'abbé les fournyt de vin et force vivres, des meilleurs chevaux qui fussent en Lavédan, de bonnes capes de Béarn et de gentilz compaignons pour les mener seurement par les montaignes; lesquelles passèrent plus à pied que à cheval, en grande sueur et travail arrivèrent à Nostre-Dame de Sarrance, où l'abbé, combien qu'il fût assez mauvais homme, ne leur osa refuser le logis, pour la craincte du Seigneur de Béarn, dont il sçavoit qu'ilz estoient bien aimez.') *

* *L'Heptaméron*, Prologue, tom. i. p. 11.

The sanctuary of Sarrance was remarkable, especially on account of the oratory and image of the blessed Virgin, which many miracles had illustrated. The zeal of the Premonstratensian fathers, to whose care it had been assigned, rendered it a centre and fountain of grace to all who visited it. The historian picturesquely remarks: 'Their white habit, the sight alone of which assured the traveller of shelter against the frosts and the snows, was to the sinner an emblem of the innocence which he had lost, and might recover at the sacred Chapel.'* They soon found themselves, through the offerings of the faithful, enabled to build a handsome convent and a magnificent church. They enclosed a large piece of ground around the monastery, cleared and reclaimed it, showing to the neighbourhood, in their agricultural operations, that example of industry and success which the monks have exhibited at all times and in all countries, as though it was their only and peculiar mission. As I have already stated, they supported numerous herds of cattle and sheep on the surrounding hills; and through the privileges accorded by the Counts of Bearn, they rapidly became more wealthy and important than their parent house at St.-Jean-de-la-Castille.

From a simple priory, Sarrance was raised to the dignity of an abbey.† The abbot, however, generally resided at the mother house at Castile; and the community of Sarrance was under the direction of a prior, the abbot being present only upon great festivals. The array of ecclesiastical dignitaries, which the valley presented upon these occasions, offered an imposing spectacle; while the abbot, with crozier and mitre, officiated with all

* 'Leur blanc manteau, dont la seule vue rassurait les voyageurs contre les neiges et les frimas, était pour les pécheurs un emblême de l'innocence qu'ils pouvaient recouvrir dans la sainte chapelle.'—*Chronique de Notre-Dame de Sarrance*, p. 19.

† *Abbey* signified a monastery of the first class, the Superior of which was called Abbot, had the rank of prelate, and generally held his authority from some other house. *Priory* was a smaller monastery, dependent upon a larger one; its Superior was appointed by the abbot, and he was called *Prior* or Provost. A *commandery* was the property of the convent, administered by a commander or bailiff appointed by the abbot or prior.

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the pomp of Catholic worship. Henry II., King of Navarre, and grandfather of Henry IV., in 1527, took the abbey of Sarrance under his special protection. He prohibited the erection of any house or other building near the chapel, without the permission of the abbot. This pious monarch little thought that his own daughter, the relentless Jeanne d'Albrecht, would overthrow the altars that he protected, and consign to the flames the symbols of religion and art that he had cherished!

Historical truth compels me to state that, about this period, some disorders began to attend the pilgrimage. With the crowd of devout people occasionally were mingled persons of loose life and tainted morals, who sought amusement or gain at the expense of the charity or the liberality of the pilgrims; and these sometimes caused scandal where edification was expected. The king, Henry II., was obliged to interpose his authority, and he published a severe edict against all those who should commit any excesses in that sacred spot, or frequent it for unseemly purposes: '*per far larronicés, excès, tahurétes et autés cas execrablés.*'* This fact proves how great were the numbers that flocked to Sarrance, as the idle and dissolute love the crowd and are seldom to be found in the desert, or, as the old chronicle expresses it, 'les gens de tapage aiment la foule; on ne les rencontre pas dans les pèlerinages peu fréquentés.'

In 1569, having burned Bétharram and levelled the abbey of St.-Jean-de-la-Castille, the Huguenots attacked Sarrance; they set fire to the noble church, which was so beautiful that an ancient writer describes it as 'the work of the hand of God rather than of that of man.' The convent, the apartments of the King of Navarre and of other great lords; the title-deeds of the order; the charter of their privileges; the procès-verbal, in which had been embodied the record of various miracles,—all indiscriminately were burned; and consequently we have to regret

* *Arch. départ.*

the scantiness of the material which has remained to the historian of its most brilliant period.

Jeanne d'Albrecht should have spared Sarrance, through respect for the memory of her mother. It was there that Marguerite of Valois assembled the personages of her story. There it was where she loved to sit, under the walls of the abbey, 'sur l'herbe verte, si noble et délicate qu'il ne lui fallait ni carreau ni tapis' (on the green grass, so noble and delicate, that they required neither cushion nor carpet); there it was that she met daily her 'conteurs d'histoire,' and from mid-day until four in the afternoon listened to their profane inventions; it was there that she so extolled the shade of the foliage and the verdure of the meadows, by the banks of the garrulous Gave: and yet these sweet recollections touched not the heart of her daughter, and in the cruelty of her religious frenzy she devoted to destruction the abbey and the cloisters which her accomplished and volatile mother had loved and celebrated.

Oloron had fallen into the hands of Montgomery—the truculent general of the queen; and, capturing town after town, the Huguenot standard advanced towards the Val d'Aspe. A number of mountaineers had assembled in arms at the *Pène d'Escot.* I have described already this narrow defile; it presented a position that might be easily defended by a handful against an army. Concealed behind the rocks, the men of Aspe successfully contested the passage with their enemies, until these had recourse to stratagem to surprise them. They proposed a truce of a few days, which was accepted by the mountaineers; and having artfully spread a report among them that the Huguenot troops had been defeated and were retreating, they persuaded them to abandon the pass and return to their homes. No sooner had they left the passage free than the enemy precipitated themselves like a torrent into the heart of the valley, and the betrayed inhabitants of Sarrance were obliged to seek safety in flight.

Those who were unable to escape were put to frightful torture. Then it was that the convent and church were destroyed, and most of the inmates massacred. The prior, Jean de Capdequi, contrived to escape, and found refuge in Spain, but all the rest were pitilessly slain at the very foot of the altar of the blessed Virgin, where they had collected for safety.

The profound desolation that reigned throughout the district was somewhat mitigated by the knowledge that the miraculous image had been saved; and that a shepherd had been able to conceal it in a hidden grotto in the depths of the mountains. At the same time the Spaniards circulated a report that the Madonna had sought shelter among them. Between Aragon and Navarre, in a district called *Cinco Villas*, stood the ruins of an old castle that had been built by Sancho Abarca, the Moor. In the year, and about the period, that the church of Sarrance had been destroyed, a statue of the blessed Virgin was unexpectedly found in the middle of these ruins. Supernatural lights and striking miracles attracted to it the veneration of the faithful. A sanctuary was immediately erected on the spot, under the title of Our Lady of Sancho Abarca; and the rumour was circulated that the miraculous Virgin of Sarrance, abandoning a land that had been profaned, had been transported by angels, over the mountains, to a kingdom which had been distinguished by its unbroken fidelity to her worship. It is, however, accepted as certain by the historians of Sarrance, that the statue never was transferred to Spain, but that, during the reign of Calvinism, it remained concealed in the hollow of the mountains, where it had been secreted by the shepherd, and from which it was brought forth when the evil days had passed away.

The property of the church, its edifices and domains, were sold by royal decree, and the commune of Bédous became the purchaser. The land, now neglected, returned to its primitive sterility, and amid the ruins of the noble convent browsed the cattle of the peasant, and the bleat-

ing of sheep and the chirping of solitary birds replaced the sacred hymns and solemn psalmody :—

> And now no vesper song is ever heard,
> Save the hoarse hooting of some churchyard bird.

This desolation continued for thirty-eight years, from 1567 to 1605. At last the persecution ceased and liberty was restored to the Catholics, and their former places of devotion began to be sought out. The old prior, Capdequi, was still alive : he returned from his exile in Spain, bringing back all the sacred things that he had carried away ; and through his energy the statue was withdrawn from its hiding-place and restored to the church, in the reconstruction of which he expended his personal fortune.

The sanctuary quickly recovered its celebrity, and the road to Sarrance was once more trod by the foot of the devout pilgrim. Many miracles are recorded to have taken place at this period : they have been preserved in the notice written by the Abbé Lassalle, who states that each miracle was attested by witnesses, who were still living when he wrote, and whose names were well known in the country. These miracles received credit not alone in the vicinity, but at a distance, and contributed much to the fame of the sanctuary.

In the year 1609, that in which divine service was resumed at Sarrance, M. de Bersolis, of the city of Dax, being attacked by a malady which was pronounced incurable, made a vow to visit Our Lady of Sarrance, and at the same moment was restored instantaneously to health ; but omitting to perform his vow, he found himself attacked by the same malady more heavily than before. Again he renewed his vow, and again he was restored. But, wonderful instance of perversity, he again failed to fulfil his vow, and for the third time he was struck down and tormented by his former pains ; when, at last, he became sensible of his ungrateful neglect, and, while still suffering, caused himself to be conveyed to Sarrance, that he might discharge his promise and die. His friends expected that his strength could not support him to accomplish the

journey; but, before he reached his destination, he was cured, and it need not be told that on this occasion he faithfully performed his vow, for the neglect of which he had suffered. He continued in good health, and had no other relapse.

In 1613, a young man, belonging to one of the first families of La Soule, arrived at Sarrance. He had been afflicted by a rupture, which had resisted all remedies; until his pious mother invoked in his aid our Lady of Sarrance, when he was suddenly and completely cured. He now came to Sarrance, as a grateful pilgrim, to discharge his mother's vow and to testify his own faith in the miraculous interposition of the blessed Virgin in his favour. This young man became subsequently a counsellor in the Parliament of Navarre, and was the celebrated ARNAUD D'OHIËNART, the learned author of a well-known work called *Notitia utriusque Vasconiæ.*

In 1632, a coachman of Comminges presented his crutch as an *ex-voto*, and deposited the following declaration as a further testimonial to the honour of our Lady:—'I had a horse that I could not master, and he was so wild that one day he threw me on a heap of large stones so heavily, that all my bones nearly were broken. I had recourse to several eminent physicians and surgeons, but all their efforts were useless. I was under their hands for more than a year without getting the least relief; on the contrary, I became worse, being always in bed, and unable to turn from one side to the other. Given up by all medical succour, I formed many vows without receiving any comfort, and continued to be afflicted incessantly by the most violent pains. In this sad condition, with my mind resigned to death, which is the common destiny of all men, I disposed my soul to meet its Creator, and made my will, leaving some little thing, according to my means, for purposes of devotion. Suddenly, as if by inspiration, I remembered formerly to have passed through Sarrance on my way to Spain, at a period when the exercise of the Catholic religion was prohibited by the malignity of the

Huguenots, and when there was nothing to be seen there but the bloody traces of their impiety. However, as I passed, I heard tell of the wonderful miracles which God had operated in that sanctuary by the intercession of the Virgin, and I said that I would further make a bequest to that chapel. Thereupon, learning that since the restoration of the Catholic religion a large concourse of people came there from all parts, some through devotion, some through expectation of cure of their infirmities, I resolved and promised to the blessed Virgin that if, through her intercession, I should be relieved from my deplorable condition, I would come myself to give thanks for my recovery, and to present to her the small offering which I desired to bequeath in my will. I had no sooner formed this vow than I felt myself grow better. I began by being able to turn myself without pain; and after having walked about for some days with the assistance of my crutch, I found myself completely recovered. Therefore I have come here to discharge this vow, and to thank the blessed Virgin for my cure.' *

Whenever any great calamity visited the crops, the entire population invariably had recourse to our Lady of Sarrance, as *Consolatrix afflictorum.* The inhabitants of Issor, in the valley of Barétous, had been reduced to penury by bad harvests during many years. Famine and despair seemed to inhabit the doomed locality, when, in their desolation, they implored for succour from Mary, making public vow to go annually in procession to Sarrance and make an offering of twelve pounds of wax candles to her altar, if they should be relieved from the scourge. Thereupon the plague, which had rendered the earth barren, ceased, and was succeeded by unhoped-for abundance; and the people of Issor continued to fulfil this engagement until the Revolution rendered its performance impossible.

These and many other cures excited much attention throughout Bearn. The veneration towards our Lady

* Lassalle, *Orig. de la dévotion de Sarrance.*

rapidly revived; and honest Protestants, attracted by these occurrences, began to regard Catholic doctrines with more favour, and even to make enquiry into their truth. What royal edicts and energetic measures could not bring about was effected by grace and the evidence of these miracles. It would seem as if the Almighty had deigned to employ these unusual means to withdraw misguided souls from error, and that He made use for that purpose of the intercession and power of Mary in those sanctuaries where her venerable name and worship had been most exposed to profanation and outrage. Bétharram and Sarrance, scarcely risen from their ruins, at this epoch were the sources of salvation to innumerable Protestants; and through the influence of Mary, exhibited in her miraculous power in these places, many were brought back to the fold, from which their fathers had been driven by persecution and themselves withheld by ignorance.

In 1675, the restored church of Sarrance was consecrated by Arnaud-François Maytie, Bishop of Oloron. He was the great grand-nephew of that famous Pierre de Maytie, who, at the beginning of the century, had so distinguished himself in his opposition to the recreant Bishop Roussel. It is recorded that an apostate friar, commissioned by Roussel, was preaching in the church of Monléon against the doctrine of indulgences in a manner that excited the indignation of his audience, when Pierre de Maytie, one of the notables of the town, and enjoying the consideration of his townsmen, inflamed by a holy zeal, protested against his language, and compelled him to leave the pulpit. Shortly after this, Roussel himself renewed his attacks upon Catholic doctrines, and this time directed his discourse against the invocation of saints. Maytie was present, and listened to him for some time with suppressed anger. He wore a large cloak, inside which he had concealed a hatchet. At last, animated by his intrepid zeal, he crossed the nave, struck the pulpit and smashed it to pieces, while the unhappy preacher fell to the ground, half dead with alarm and excitement. It

was under the episcopal government of the descendant of this vigorous champion that the church of Sarrance was rebuilt and consecrated.

The devotion of Arnaud de Maytie towards our Lady was so great, that he solicited from God that he might die upon one of her feasts. His prayer was heard, and he died, as he himself had foretold, on the feast of the Visitation, July 2, 1682. He bequeathed his mitre and crozier to the chapel of Sarrance, where his body reposes in the sanctuary, to the left of the high altar, under a marble slab. The inscription records his great devotion to our Lady and her sanctuary, and I felt much satisfaction in copying it.

CI GÎT MESSIRE ARNAUD-FRANÇOIS DE MAYTIE,
ÉVESQUE D'OLORON.
MOURUT LE 2 JUILLET 1682.
COMME CE GRAND PRÉLAT, CET ILLUSTRE MAISTRE,
AVOIT ÉTÉ DÉVOT À LA MÈRE DE DIEU,
IL A VOULU QUE SON CORPS FÛT PORTÉ D'OLORON
DANS CET AUGUSTE SANCTUAIRE.

In 1747, Father Fauconné, prior of the monastery, thus writes about it:—'The entire diocese, and especially the towns of Sainte-Marie and Oloron, have no greater confidence than in the protection of our Lady. There are parishes which go in procession every year, to place themselves under the wings of her sovereign power. The people of other dioceses, such as Bayonne, Dax, and Lescar, make it a duty to go to Sarrance or to send trustworthy persons there, to render that homage to the Queen of Angels which the Church prescribes. This devotion has penetrated beyond the mountains; and the vitality of our ancient house is renewed daily by the presents of merchants resident in Spain. The wonders which the blessed Virgin operates in her chapel have always been numberless; they continue to be so still, and we may well hope that this abounding source will never dry up. It would require many books to publish those miracles which have occurred in our day. A small abridgment of them was written formerly, but it has not been

continued, because they are published by the people everywhere; and, moreover, a subject of so much delicacy might suffer from the indiscretion of narrators: *Dicant qui sentiunt; fama loquatur.*'*

I pass over the history of certain quarrels which took place between the neighbouring towns of Bédous and Sarrance, as well as the circumstances attending the erection of the Church of the Angel Guardians as the parish church, because these squabbles and details cannot have any interest for general readers. Those whom they may interest will find them set forth in the Abbé Menjoulet's graphic and faithful little work, 'CHRONIQUE DE NOTRE-DAME DE SARRANCE.' I take this opportunity to acknowledge the great assistance that I have derived from his labours in this instance, as I have already done in that of Bétharram.

At the period of the outbreak of the French Revolution, the monastery of Sarrance was composed of five fathers. These were soon subjected to the fate which annihilated everything sacred in religion and in property throughout the kingdom. The National Assembly had passed an edict to relieve all religious orders from their vows; but those at Sarrance refused the exemption, as did almost all others. Their goods and lands were confiscated and put up to auction; their church was closed, and the chapel of our Lady was consigned to the municipality. After a short time public worship was prohibited altogether, the sacred ornaments and ecclesiastical furniture disappeared, and for a period it seemed as if the very memory of the ancient shrine and its devotions had perished for ever. The altars and pictures were removed, with the exception of the altars of St. Norbert and St. Martin, which were preserved in a singular manner. They were built into the walls,† and as these became the property of the commune, they were not pulled down, but allowed to stand.

* Menjoulet, *Chronique de Sarrance*, p. 66.

† 'Les arcades furent murées.'

That piety, which dared not declare itself openly, watched privately over the hallowed place; and even before the Concordat had enabled religion to resume its former liberties, the pilgrimage of Sarrance had quietly regained its ancient hold upon the devotion of the people. In 1798, persecution had so far relaxed as to allow the curé, Castéra, to exercise his ministry, but this was confined to ordinary parochial duty. The fate of the miraculous statue, during these troubles, was not generally known, but it was suspected that its place of concealment was not a secret to the curé and a few other persons. Some dozen young men determined to recover it, and have it once more placed upon the altar. Accordingly, they organised themselves into a secret band, under the mysterious name of the Company of *Don Diego*, and began their operations by addressing threatening letters to the curé and his supposed accomplices, as though they had studied in the school of modern Ribbonism. This was followed up by a constant discharge of fire-arms in the streets during the night, until the statue was unexpectedly found, early one morning, near the chapel of St. Anne. No one knew whence it had come. It was carried to the church with great solemnity, amid the tears and thanksgiving of the people.

A short time after this, the people of Bédous, which is the chief town of the canton, resolved to carry off the statue and place it in their own church; and for this purpose they proceeded to Sarrance with the Maire at their head. They were opposed vigorously by the inhabitants, and were compelled to retire without accomplishing their object. They did not, however, give up their pretensions, and they still determined, if possible, to possess themselves of the treasure. If there was some piety in this design, there was no doubt some speculation in it also; as these worthy people calculated upon benefiting themselves and their town not a little, by the concourse of pilgrims which they hoped would follow the statue.

The location and possession of the statue were taken up

by the Maire of Accous as a question which concerned the interests of the valley generally. He convoked the other Maires of the canton, and, in an eloquent speech, endeavoured to impress upon them the rights of Bédous to its possession, as centre of the district as well as former proprietor of Sarrance. He put the question to the vote, and in the first instance called upon the Maire of Osse, who, being a Protestant, it was thought would vote for the transfer of the statue to Bédous. He replied, shortly and concisely: 'It is at Sarrance that I have always seen the Virgin; at Sarrance I will leave her!' ('C'est à Sarrance que j'ai toujours vu la Vierge; je la laisse à Sarrance!') This unexpected answer decided the votes of the rest; the Maire of Accous was left alone in his attempt, and the statue has remained unmolested at Sarrance from that day to the present.

Consequent upon the arrangements under the Concordat between Napoleon and the Pope, Sarrance was constituted a parish in 1801, and annexed to the new diocese of Bayonne. The bishop gladly would have placed the church again under the direction of the *White Fathers*, but the order of the Premonstratensians no longer existed in France. Those who had belonged to the order, and who had survived the Revolution, had put their services at the disposal of the bishop, who had given them appointments in different parishes. Father Castéra was appointed to his old mission at Sarrance, and this appointment of an old *Prémontré* seemed a link between the two periods. But, in reality, the difference was great; and however devoted may be the zeal of a parish priest, he cannot command the resources nor supply the place of a community; nor can he ever exercise the same influence that attaches to the ministry of the regular orders.

Such, however, is the vitality of popular devotion, that no sooner was the restoration of the old sanctuary accomplished, than pilgrims flocked to it in great numbers. Fathers from the hills brought their young men to offer their thanksgivings; the sick and the sorrowing once

more prostrated themselves at the feet of the miraculous statue and, as in past ages, once again were recorded the wonderful results which proved that Sarrance was still a fountain of grace, where Mary loved to bestow her favours.

Abbé Menjoulet thus writes of its restoration:—'There is no longer, it is true, the religious pomp, the beautiful ceremonies, of the days of the Premonstratensians; the blight of the Revolution has left its traces upon the chapel. But it is easy to foresee that this holy place, which had been so privileged, will again become the focus of piety to a great portion of the diocese of Bayonne. In 1846, I assisted, for the first time, at the principal solemnity of Sarrance, on the feast of the Assumption. The sight of the attentive audience that gathered round the pulpit, of the number of devout communicants that knelt at the holy table, of the long line of pilgrims that wound in procession through the modest streets of the humble village, filled my heart with an assured presentiment that the resurrection of its former celebrity was at hand.'* And this presentiment has been realised. The monastery, after having belonged during half a century to the family of Camou, one of whose members has been no less distinguished for his gallantry as a general in the army than for his piety as a Christian,† has again become the property of the Church. Through the charitable zeal of Mademoiselle Zoé Camou, the Bishop of Bayonne was enabled to become the possessor of the convent, the old cloister, and the garden. After a short time he placed the mission under the direction of the fathers of Garaison, who brought to Sarrance that holy energy and spirit of prayer and sacrifice by which they have accomplished such spiritual results at Bétharram and elsewhere. The church and convent have already undergone such repairs as have rendered them not altogether unworthy of their former renown.

* *Chronique de N.-D. de Sarrance*, p. 77.

† There is a picture in the chapel at Sarrance of the Madonna, brought from Sebastopol and presented as an offering to our Lady of Sarrance by General Camou.

But much still remains to be done; and this account will not have been written in vain if it should inspire some devout follower of Mary—some zealous admirer of ancient devotion, to visit this interesting spot and place an offering upon its altars.

Before the Revolution there existed a Calvary around the enclosure, in which the stations were represented in fourteen different chapels, some of which still exist. Besides these there were four other chapels, two of which are still standing; one of them on the banks of the Gave, known as *Notre-Dame de la Pierre*; the other, near the bridge beyond the village, is that of ST. ANNE, near which the statue was found, after the midnight demonstration of the young men of 'Don Diego.' It is much to be desired that the good fathers could follow the example of those of Bétharram, and restore their Calvary to the devotion of the pilgrims. When I visited it, two lonely women from the hills were making their pilgrimage with much fervour, and I was informed that no day passes, during the summer season, that some distant penitent does not seek the intercession, and kneel at the shrine, of our Lady of Sarrance.

It is the pious custom of the citizens of Oloron to seek their Sunday recreation at the feet of Mary, in the pleasant valley of the Aspe. The country of La Soule and of old Bearn seems to have been reinspired by their former affection for this sanctuary; and during the Pyrenean season, many a devout traveller from beyond the seas bends in reverential homage before this shrine, and puts up his prayer that some portion of the favours which have been abundantly vouchsafed in this spot for a thousand years may be shed upon his soul, and upon that of those for whom he prays, and thus realise the farewell words of the 'Chronique':—'Que les bontés de la Vierge Marie continuent à se répandre sur la chapelle de Sarrance et sur tous ceux qui la visitent!' This account of Sarrance would be incomplete if it did not contain the brief description given of it by Father Poiré. He writes:—'In the mountains of Bearn and diocese of Oloron, the seat of the

Parliament of Navarre, there is a place of devotion, commonly called Our Lady of Sarrance, occupied by religious of the order of the Prémontrés. During more than four hundred years past this place has been honoured by a multitude of persons, who flock thither from all parts. A number of miracles have been witnessed there, some in the cases even of the Kings of Aragon and of Navarre. These have shown so much affection to the place, that they have constructed a residence there, to which they retire whenever impelled by devotion. As regards the church of our Lady, it is situated at the foot of a high mountain, surrounded by several others of so prodigious a height, that an entire day at least would be necessary to reach the summit of the lowest. The ancient devotion has been considerably diminished during the last fifty years, since the Queen Jeanne has hunted the Catholic religion out of Bearn. But at present (1630) it has begun to revive again, through the zeal of our great and invincible Louis, who, having carried into these quarters his invincible arms, has re-established the piety which had been banished from them.' *

There is a comfortable but primitive inn at Sarrance, where the traveller will find a good clean bed, excellent trout, a delicious omelette, much attention, and moderate charges. It is kept by *M. Victor Bourdet*, and is known as La Maison LASSALLE, Hôtel du Cerf. The old proprietor had died about four months before the time of my visit, leaving an only daughter, who, acting under the advice of her friends, had married very recently a young man of the village who had spent some years in California, whence, among other acquisitions, he had brought back a thorough fluency in the English language. She is the collateral descendant of Father Lassalle, the first historian of Notre-Dame de Sarrance, and she did me the favour of copying for me, in a most excellent handwriting, several extracts from an old well-thumbed copy of his work in her possession, and which is now extremely rare.

* *La triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, tom. i. p. 276. Appendix G.

If the traveller should be tempted to pursue his journey beyond Sarrance, farther into the valley of the Aspe, he will be amply rewarded by the beauty of the scenery. Although not so grand as that of other Pyrenean valleys, it is inferior to none in softness, fertility, and variety. Bédous, of which so much has been heard in this narrative, does not possess any particular interest; but, beyond it, the plain of Accous is singularly picturesque. The conical formation of three detached hills, as if dropped down from the top of the neighbouring mountain, will not fail to attract attention. In this plain there are no less than six villages, with their spires rivalling the tops of the poplars, and there is an average of a thousand inhabitants to each. The plain, which supports this large population in so narrow a space, is highly cultivated, and teems with fertility. One of these villages, that of Osse, is inhabited almost altogether by Protestants. I much regret that I was not able to pass a day among them, that I might have observed whether any difference of character or habits exists between them and their Catholic neighbours.

At Accous was born, in 1698, the poet CYPRIEN D'ESPOURRIN, who is considered the Tibullus of Bearn. During nearly two centuries his ballads and verses have retained their popularity; they still are chanted in the remote valleys, and the mountain maiden, with her distaff in her hand, still thrills them as she moves gracefully along. They are simple lays of shepherd life and shepherd love, and breathe a certain sadness which is often found in mountain poetry. His *Cansous* have been collected and edited by Vignancourt of Pau; gathered more from the unlettered lips of the peasants than from printed or manuscript remains. If some have praised too much the *chansonnier of Accous*, by comparing him to Theocritus and Virgil, others have fallen into the opposite extreme, from an apprehension of lauding him too much. The shepherd of the Pyrenees passes, during summer, a life of isolation on inaccessible peaks in lonely mountains. He is almost always alone; and if sometimes a divine inspira-

tion animates him, if the inward throes of his thought excite and torment him, if he learns to give expression to his griefs or his loves, to what or to whom can he confide them, if not to solitude? And thus, D'Espourrin confided his *cansous* to the lips of the shepherd, and the memory of the people has carefully preserved them.*

Pastouréts qui n'abét encouere
Goustat que plasés et douçous,
Gouardat-pé soustout d'ayma hère,
Si loung-temps boulét bibe urous.

O shepherd swain! whose life till now
Has been a path of pleasure merely,
That silvery age may clothe thy brow,
Be careful never to love dearly!

A monument has been erected in the town of Accous to the memory of their tuneful countryman.

Beyond Accous the valley becomes very narrow, while the road passes under the *Pène d'Esquit*, which rises up like a gigantic pyramid of marble, overshadowing the plain beneath. At Etsaut one is struck by the massive structure of the houses and the Oriental character of the very narrow street. On the interior of one of these houses an Arabic inscription is encrusted. A little beyond Etsaut the passage to Spain is barred by the stupendous fort of Urdos, which constitutes one of the military wonders of the empire. The citadel is built on the summit of the solid rock, and stands at a height of 500 feet above the torrent at its base. A bridge, called the *Pont d'Enfer*, conducts from the high road over the precipice to the foot of the fortress, to which one ascends by an easy zigzag path, at the end of which is the drawbridge and portcullis, giving entrance to the fort. The galleries are cut in the hard rock—rock above, below, and at both sides, presenting a most admirable specimen of engineering science and hardihood. The views from the port-holes of the galleries, over the valley and the distant villages, is highly pictorial. This fort was built, at enormous cost, by Louis-Philippe, with a view to con-

* *Essai sur la Langue et la Littérature du Béarn*, par M. Gustave B. de Lagrèze.

tingencies in Spain, at the period of the Montpensier marriage, and no doubt would be a formidable obstacle to any invasion that Iberian ambition or revenge might attempt upon that side.

CANTIQUE À NOUSTE-DAME DE SARRANCE.

A bostes pès, ô bonne Bierge,
Lou péléri qu'éy prousternat;
Sus boste aütaà qué brûle u cierge
Qué lou sou cô p'a présentat;
Tout en plouran dab aboundance
Qu'ép ditz sa péne y soun chégri. . . .
Ah! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Escoutat plaà lou péléri.

La may qu'ép porte soun maynatge
Triste, acabat, dé maü hérit.
A génous, près dé boste imatge
Qu'ép proumét tout, si l'y guarit,
Soun cô doulén qu'ép da d'abance;
Si l'exaüçat b'éü héra gay! . . .
Ah! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Exaüçat dounc la praübe may.

U malhurous mingeat de frèbé,
Dens lou sou lheit qué p'éy pourtat.
Sente Bierge, hèt dounc qu'és lhèbé . . .
Qu'ép laüdéra de tout coustat . . .
En tourtéyan gnaüte s'abance,
Tout acroupit, carcat dé maüs. . . .
Ah! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Guarit, guarit touts lous malaüs.

L'oüilhé d'éü soum de la mountine,
Qu'ép récoumande soun clédat,
Lou ray qu'ép lèche sa sourine,
Abans dé parti coum souldat;
Lou cô traücat coum d'uë lance
La sourine qu'éy toute en plous. . . .
Ah! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Guardat toupets, rays y sérous.

Thus, with its sanctuary at Sarrance and its fortress at Urdos, the valley of the Aspe offers much interest and beauty, and will amply reward the curiosity of the tourist not less than the devotion of the pilgrim.

HYMN TO OUR LADY OF SARRANCE.

At thy dear feet, O Virgin good!
The pilgrim prostrate doth incline:
A lamp illumes thy altar's rood,
An offering from his heart to thine.
With tears abundant he implores
Of thee, loved Lady of Sarrance,
That thou wouldst heal his aching sores,
And cast on him a pitying glance!

The weeping mother, sad and lorn,
Presents to thee her suffering child,
And on her knees, in grief forlorn,
Prays thou wilt calm her anguish wild.
Oh! she will deck thy chapel fair,
With richest gifts thy shrine enhance,
If thou wilt hearken to her prayer
And cure her babe, loved Lady of Sarrance!

A wretched man, in fever dread,
Seeks rosy health at thy famed shrine;
Oh! raise him from his tossing bed,
And all the glory will be thine!
Another comes, infirm and bowed—
Many in helpless pain advance;
But thou wilt cure that needy crowd,
Who trust the Virgin of Sarrance!

The shepherd, on the mountain side,
To thee confides his roaming flock;
The sister prays that thou wilt guide
Her brother in the battle's shock:
And when the rush of war rolls by,
Death glittering on the soldier's lance,
Oh! listen to that maiden's cry,
And save her brother, Lady of Sarrance!

Espiat aü houns de la Capère
Aquét homi d'éüs oeilhs muilhats ;
Chens abé maü, qué soufreich hère ;
Ah ! qué soufreich de souns pécats. . . .
D'éü pécadou qu'ét l'espérance
Y soun réfutge en sa doulou. . . .
Ah ! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Ayat piétat d'éü pécadou.

Dé touts siat la may téndre y bou
D'éüs plaà pourtans y d'éüs malaüs,
D'éüs qui porten bère couroune,
Y d'éüs qui marchen pè-descaüs,
Dé la bieillesse y dé l'enfance,
D'éüs qui soun près, d'éüs qui soun loueing.
Ah ! Nouste-Dame de Sarrance,
Dé touts, dé touts prénét grand soueing.

Down in the lonely chapel kneeling,
Behold that ancient man who weeps;
Oh! hear his sobs, some woe revealing
Of conscience struck, that never sleeps.
Thou art the sinner's hopeful stay,
Oh! cast on him a favouring glance;
Shed comfort on his sorrowing way,
And save him, Lady of Sarrance!

Of all thou art the Mother kind:
In sickness' gloom, in health's conceit,
Of those whose brow a crown doth bind,
Of those who walk with naked feet,
Of infancy and hoary age,
Of those at home, of those afar;
Loved Lady of Sarrance, assuage
Their ills, and grant the sinner's prayer!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF PIETAT.

OUR LADY OF PIÉTAT.

(Bearn.)

Apprenez-nous, je vous supplie,
Quel est ce lieu
Où est l'image de Marie,
Mère de Dieu.

On dit qu'elle est dans un désert,
Assez ornée,
Et les peuples vont de concert
Où elle est honorée.

Ce lieu est beau et admirable,
Par sa hauteur;
C'est le séjour le plus aimable
Pour un pécheur.

Cantique spirituel sur La Piétat.

The fair town of Pau has long enjoyed merited celebrity among British travellers seeking for health or pleasure in the sunny regions of genial France. Its soft soothing climate, its good accommodation, and its agreeable society, render it pre-eminent among the winter abodes that offer alleviation to the sick or distraction to the idle. Every luxury that English comfort or American and Russian extravagance can suggest may be found in its numerous lodging-houses and villas. The hotels are kept with elegance and civility, and many of them, in their spacious saloons, supply society and entertainment to those whose acquaintance may be limited, or whose health may forbid exposure to night air and late hours. There is an English club, that is scarcely inferior in its arrangements to those in London; and while liberal in its admission of all unob-

jectionable sojourners, it forms the nucleus of English gossip and the centre of English sport and play. And then there are the English fox-hounds, whose 'master' is an American, and whose secretary and foremost horsemen are French. Few visitors to Pau will forget the brilliant and exciting aspect of the 'meets,' where the dexterous riders who last night shone in the ball-room are the first this morning at the cover's side, disporting the symmetry of their London 'Amazones;' nor yet the long line of carriages, bringing the *élite* of the fashion to smile upon the sport, all mingling pell-mell with hound and horse, until the huntsman's horn announces that the dogs are on the scent, and Reynard is making for the woods.*

* The following sketch of Pau amusements has been published in the *Field* for August 21, 1869:—

'*Hunting, &c., at Pau.*—The present M. F. H. at Pau is Mr. Livingstone, an American gentleman, who has been many years a resident, and is deservedly popular with his field, also with the country people. The foxes are caught in distant parts, and turned loose at some convenient distance from the meets, of which there are generally three a week, at various distances from Pau, and in different localities; so that the country may be as equally galloped over as possible during the season, which commences about Nov. 1 and goes on until about March 1, or as long as the weather allows, the heat in spring time being very great in some years. The hour of meeting is eleven o'clock usually, sometimes later—to suit convenience as to distance or the last night's gaieties. The average distance to the meet is eight English miles, the most distant seventeen miles. Wheels are the usual mode of conveyance to the meet, from the dashing Victoria to the bicycle, the climate not being suited to too much fast horse exercise, so few gentlemen ride. The hounds are high-bred dwarf foxhounds. The pack has been much improved by two judiciously chosen drafts from the Lymington kennels. They hunt rather too much for some of the field, who prefer galloping. The hunting establishment is kept up by subscription, and the expenses are heavy. The huntsman is a native, Mons. Bernis, who brings his hounds to the covert side in very good and even condition. He rides very hard, and sticks to the line of his fox as pertinaciously as a late M. F. H. of "shire" renown. Horses suffer from the extreme rarity of the air, and are greatly distressed when the run is more than short, sharp, and decisive, thus one fox is the allowance per day. The scent generally is good, and the country favourable for its lying, the verdure being long, the scent is thus caught by more than the short grass or bare road. The country is extremely trappy, the banks like razors, and the ditches very blind, so that falls are not very "far or few between." Only in one or two districts are even moderate-sized fields to be found, so that a compact, well-trained gentleman's hunter is absolutely necessary to see and enjoy the sport, and keep company with the *habitués* of the hunt, among whom there are to be found as good riders—French particularly so, also Americans—as can be wished for. Young horses have not their constitutions sufficiently established for the change of climate, and are always "to pieces" the first season. I would recommend nothing under five years old at least. The expense of horse-keep is about the same as in England, rather less, varying according to the last harvest. I

In addition to these 'agréments,' the people of all classes are civil and obliging; the 'magasins' or shops are not more extortionate than elsewhere; provisions are abundant, and the vegetables and fruit are delicious, while the préfet (Arribeaud) and other authorities, as becomes their administrative position, are courteous and hospitable. For the religious needs of foreigners there is ample provision. Two magnificent new Catholic churches, those of St.-Jacques and St.-Martin, have replaced the gloomy inconvenient structures of former days; and the Society of Jesus has recently opened a church, which for the chasteness, lightness, and elegance of its interior cannot be too much admired. There are no less than four temples appropriated to the English Protestant worship, from the very coldest Presbyterian to the warmest illumination of the High Church. One of these buildings is of iron, but its foundation is not upon the Rock. Even the Russians have built

should advise private stabling—to be easily found if sought for early in the autumn—and stablemen to be sent out with the horses to remain the season, as the Pau straps are very much behindhand in every way. Mr. Larony is the V. S., and shoes horses on the English system, taking great pains to give satisfaction, charging six francs, and five francs for the French. M. Freziney, on the Route de Tarbes, supplies excellent oats, carrots, and beans. The hay and straw can be purchased every Monday in the market. The best of the former comes from the Idron district. Last season the prices of forage ruled high. Steamers leave Liverpool the 1st, 10th, and 20th of each month; average passage four days. Fare for horse, 5*l.*; for servant, 2*l.* 10*s.* The owner provides all forage. The servant's meals are included, but not liquids. Messrs. Moss & Co., 78, Tower-buildings, Liverpool, are the agents, and are most obliging. The train delivers horses at Pau from Bordeaux in eight hours, leaving at 6 A.M. Some notices have to be given at the railway station as to horses going by the railway for horse-boxes. Horse's fare, 55f. At Mr. Larrigan's, Haute Plante, Rue Bayard, good stabling is to be found, and forage. Some gentlemen keep their horses at livery there. Mr. Larrigan is a very good rider, and has good hands and quiet temper with young horses. Mr. Lannuce and Mr. Pisson hire the best horses (hunters) at 160f. a month, keep included; and the veritable Pau hack, a *spécialité* in horseflesh, that goes for ever, never was known to tumble, yet always has broken knees; it can be procured elsewhere on more moderate terms. I would advise gentlemen or ladies, under any circumstances, who intend to ride, to bring their own saddles and bridles for their own comfort. There is a cricket club at Pau, the ground very good, and play three times a week, and matches very often. A golf club has lately been established. This game has been much patronised, and is much to be recommended as a means of taking exercise for those who cannot afford the expense of horse exercise, for at Pau exercise is obligatory to the healthy and strong if they wish to retain that principal of all earthly blessings. As to fishing and shooting, the former is a myth, the latter a delusion—*cela ne vaut pas la peine.*—X. X. X.'

themselves a church, whose sumptuous carpeting and exquisite mosaics resemble rather the decorations of a lady's boudoir than those of a Christian house of prayer.

In the chapel of the Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, generally known as the Hospice, there is service in the afternoon during the season for British Catholics, where they may receive instruction and go to confession in their own tongue. This benefit, which is of incalculable importance, not alone to the deserving class of young women in service, but to their 'betters,' has been secured permanence through the indefatigable energy and charitable zeal of MONSIGNOR THOMAS CAPEL. This pious and accomplished priest came to Pau about eight years ago, in bad health, with the hope of prolonging his young life for yet a little space of usefulness in God's holy service. Its regenerating climate, in course of time, re-established his strength sufficiently to permit him to perform some missionary duty. He soon discovered the want which is felt in so many continental towns frequented by the English—that of religious instruction and direction for the poor Catholic servants, brought in the train of the rich, and sometimes neglected or undeservedly discarded by them. To assist and protect these became with him a work of personal thanksgiving as well as of missionary labour. God visibly blessed his work, and each succeeding year has added fresh testimony to the untold good that he has wrought. The English mission in Pau has now become, in Imperial language, 'un fait accompli;' it is cherished by the curé of the parish, it is protected by the bishop of the diocese, and before long will exhibit its stability and importance in the erection of a chapel of ease or oratory, in connection with the new church of St.-Martin, and devoted especially to the accommodation of English-speaking Catholics. The fervid and logical eloquence of Monsignor Capel has extended his celebrity as a preacher beyond the Pyrenees; and its fruitful results may be appreciated in the numbers to whom, every year, he has been the means of developing

Catholic truth and rescuing from the darkness of heresy and unbelief.*

As there may be some among my readers who neither by study nor travel have yet made acquaintance with the capital of ancient Bearn, and its surpassing loveliness, I will extend my introduction somewhat further, and for this purpose will avail myself to a small extent of the assistance of M. Taine, a clever, witty, but superficial writer on the Pyrenees. He represents himself as standing for the first time on that beautiful esplanade at the end of the Place Royale, and gazing upon the wondrous panorama that there unfolds itself, he writes:—'The first effect of the southern sun, shining over that lovely valley and towering mountains in the distance, is indescribable. A stream of brilliant light floats uninterrupted by a cloud over the horizon from one end to the other. The heart grows full while one gazes on that immense space; the very atmosphere seems a festival, and the dazzled sight becomes blind with the brightness which glitters over the burning dome of heaven. The waters of the river sparkle like a wreath of diamonds; the mountain range, which yesterday was veiled in mist, spreads itself out before the sun, unfolding its verdant clothing to the rays. The blue Pyrenees in the distance look like clouds, the atmosphere which envelopes them giving them an aerial character, like vapoury phantoms lingering upon the snow-white horizon. In the middle of that rugged chain, the Pic du Midi d'Ossau lifts up its abrupt cone. The distance softening its outline, colour becomes mingled and confounded, and the Pyrenees look as if they wore the graceful border of a smiling landscape. There is nothing severe nor imposing in their aspect; their beauty is serene, and the impression which they leave is that of the most pure enjoyment.'† It is not alone when

* In acknowledgment of his many services to religion, Mgr. Capel has been lately created *Cameriere Segreto* by his Holiness the Pope. He is at present absent from Pau on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the Marquis of Bute; but the duties of the English mission are efficiently carried on by the Reverend Father Denny, of the Oblates of St. Charles. (Pau, March 1869.)

† *Voyage aux Pyrénées*, par H. Taine, p. 78. (1867.)

lighted by the glare of the summer sun that this superb landscape merits a dithyramb like the foregoing. It is loveliest in the varying hues of autumn and early winter; and when the icy snow has clothed and made transparent the distant peaks, and the yellow foliage of the 'fall' has darkened into the russet brown of Christmas, I cannot imagine a more soothing or a more diversified prospect to charm the eye and revive the heart of the invalid, nor one where sweet thoughts and blessed memories would be more lovingly pondered by the sad of heart or the weak of body.

If Pau is thus justly celebrated for its climate, and for the grandeur and loveliness of the scenery that surrounds it, it is not without resources for those deeper spirits who raise their contemplations from nature to nature's God. Among the many charming sites which adorn the neighbourhood of Pau, there is none more remarkable nor more beautiful than that on which stands the chapel of Piétat, or of Our Lady of Mercy. It is fifteen kilomètres distant, and may be approached by three or four different roads. That which is generally taken by visitors passes through a richly-wooded undulating country, thickly adorned with pretty villas and pleasant country seats, opening upon most luxuriant glimpses of verdant valleys and silvery streams, and terminated by the giant barrier of the everlasting hills. Nothing can be more magnificent than the view from the summit, on which the little chapel has been erected. On the east the lovely valley of the Gave enchants the eye with its countless towns and villages, including Arros, St. Abit, and Coarraze. To the west may be perceived the picturesque hamlets of the town of Gan, and of the village of Aubertin; to the south the woods of Arros, Asson, Louvie, and Sévignac, enclosed in a superb amphitheatre of majestic mountains; while to the north the vine-clad hills of Jurançon and Pau itself, with its ancient château, its shining hotels, and graceful spires, complete the picture.

While one looks down upon such a scene as I have described, one is struck by the utter stillness that reigns

around. It is holy ground: in this delicious solitude no distracting noise disturbs the calm of pious meditation; here, all is profound silence, leading the soul that submits to its influence irresistibly away from man and upward to God. An old writer observes, that if this spot had not been chosen by our Lady herself, its selection as a place of pilgrimage would have shown the deeply religious sentiments by which our ancestors were inspired; and he adds, that from that sacred hill the Mother of Mercy seems to offer the treasure of her graces to the favoured village of PARDIES, which nestles at its feet, and to the fertile plain of NAY, 'gentille, agréable et marchande,' as Montaigne calls it, which is considered to be the garden of Bearn, and whose inhabitants have ever been foremost in gratitude and devotion to our Lady of Mercy.

But alas! the condition of the sanctuary nowadays is but little in keeping with the splendour of its surroundings; it is solitary and almost deserted. The approach on the north-western side is through a short alley of young oaks, while at the opposite side there extends a long broad avenue, terminated by three large crosses, that mark the spot afar to the dwellers in the plain. On this spot formerly stood the residence of the fathers who were attached to the sanctuary and ministered to the pilgrims. The chapel itself is much dilapidated; it is irregular and unsightly in its construction, roofed with small slate, and presents somewhat the appearance of the old, wayside chapels in country parts of Ireland. The interior is neglected, damp and dismal, but exhibiting the remains of former care and ornament. The statue of our Lady, which is behind the high altar, is the same that has been there since the foundation of the church, having escaped the ravages of the Revolution in some unaccountable manner. It is rather coarse of feature, and has the ruddy expression of a mountain maid, but it still retains the veneration of the people of the neighbourhood. On last Trinity Sunday (1868), which is the great festival of Notre-Dame de Piétat, no less than 5,000 people visited and paid their

devotions at the foot of the old statue. The belfry was erected in 1662, and on the bell is the inscription :—

MATER MISERICORDIÆ, ORA PRO NOBIS.

The door is generally kept locked, but there is a wing at the south side, with a grating like that of a prison, through which the casual visitor may see the altar and the statue, before which a pale lamp burns perpetually. Over this grating is the inscription :—

MÈRE DE DIEU, PRIEZ POUR NOUS À L'HEURE DE NOTRE MORT.
L'an de J.-C. 1802.

We remained for some time in sad meditation and prayer at the foot of the widowed altar, and then wandered through the branching chesnut trees and venerable oaks, descending by a rough path to the holy well, where we devoutly drank the waters, as we listened to many stories of sudden cures that were narrated by the pious old woman to whom the keys of the chapel are entrusted. She informed us that the care of the chapel belonged to the Curé of Pardies, which is about four kilomètres distant, and that he said Mass there occasionally during the week, and on all feasts of our Lady. As we descended the hill, on our return to Pau, I called upon the present estimable pastor of Pardies, the Abbé SALLES. He received me in his modest manse with the most Catholic cordiality; and when I informed him of the object of my visit he entered warmly into it. After conversing for a short time on the subject, he suddenly rose from his seat, and entering a small room where he kept his desk and a select collection of ecclesiastical and historical works, brought out a manuscript notice of the history of *La Piétat de Béarn*, written by himself, and with a kindness and confidence for which I cannot express too much obligation, placed it in my hands, with permission to make it my own. The remainder of this sketch is almost a literal translation of his narrative.

The chapel of Notre-Dame de Piétat is situated in the commune of Pardies and canton of Nay. The origin of Pardies goes back to a very remote period, and it was

once reckoned amongst the most flourishing towns in the plain. However, its prosperity diminished largely during the invasion of the Normans, and again, subsequently, during the misnamed 'wars of religion.' It possessed at one time two churches; one parochial, dedicated to St. Michael, and the other dedicated to the blessed Virgin. They both were burned in 1563 by the Calvinists, who erected a Huguenot temple in their stead: the Catholic church has been rebuilt long since—the site of the Huguenot temple is not known at the present day!

In the seventh century, one of the Dukes of Perigord, called Adalbalde, made a journey into the territory of the Vascons, to visit the country and kinsfolk of his wife, Rictrude; and during this journey he was attacked and assassinated in the wood of Pardies by a band of robbers. The place in which this crime was perpetrated received the names of *Mortious* (murder) and *Gleiza* (church), because a chapel was erected on the spot in his honour. He was regarded by the people as a martyr; and the oratory, being consecrated to our Lady, became a place of pilgrimage for the neighbourhood. This edifice, the remains of which still existed in 1746, was destroyed during the Huguenot troubles, at the same period as the churches of Pardies; the parish was deprived of a pastor for the long space of sixty years, and the pilgrimage and the sanctuary became, as it were, forgotten.

A long period now intervenes, of which we have no record either in history or in local tradition. But Providence, desiring to recall this people to their ancient veneration for his blessed Mother, seems to have adopted the means of a public infliction for that purpose. In the middle of the seventeenth century the town and neighbourhood of Pardies were visited with accumulated calamities. Hail-storms, epidemics among men, epizooties among cattle, desolated this unhappy district, as if it were doomed to endure the manifold miseries with which divine wrath sometimes chastises populations and nations. During ten consecutive years the vial of Heaven's ven-

geance continued to pour forth its contents upon this devoted spot, overwhelming it with wretchedness and despair. The lands were untilled, as hands and means for their cultivation were wanting in most instances. In other instances men had not the heart to sow or plant, as they could not calculate upon the harvest, and thus misery and idleness took possession of everyone. An acre of the best land was sold for a bushel of corn, while the wretched inhabitants, like those of Ireland at a recent period, were driven to feed upon nettles and grass. The fathers of families fled from this accursed land and sought refuge in Spain, taking with them their children and their household goods. It is recorded that there never had fallen hail of so large a size; that the thunder and lightning had never been so frequent and terrific; that the sun had never been so scorching in its summer heat, nor the rain and the winds so disastrous in their winter fury.

In this state of things their merciful Mother, Mary, took compassion upon her once faithful votaries. A simple God-fearing shepherd had charge of the herds of goats belonging to the villages of the plain; and while he was engaged in this employment on the heights to the west of Pardies, he was visited, on three different occasions and at long intervals, by a mysterious lady, whom tradition affirms to have been the blessed Virgin. Upon each occasion the unknown lady directed the goatherd to urge the despondING inhabitants of Pardies to build a chapel on that spot, in honour of our Lady of Mercy, assuring him that upon their doing so, all the calamities by which they had been so long afflicted should cease.

Liberty of worship having been obtained, in 1620, under the edicts of Louis XIII., they had already overcome at Pardies the opposition of the Huguenots and rebuilt their parish church. But from these manifestations to the shepherd they concluded that something more was necessary, and that the restoration of the chapel and sanctuary of Piétat was required, as expiation for the outrages and insults that had been offered in that place to the Mother

of God by the Calvinists and their soldiery. In this persuasion they made a vow to rebuild the chapel, and on May 29, 1664, addressed a petition to the Bishop of Lescar, praying for the necessary permission. In this memorial they drew a touching picture of the miseries which had overwhelmed them during so many years, stating the reason which impelled them to contemplate such an undertaking. In two days they received the required authorisation, and on the succeeding day they began their work. As the blessed Virgin herself had pointed out to the goatherd the exact spot on which she selected to be venerated, the new chapel was erected on the highest point of the district, called *Couts*, in preference to the old site at Mourtious.

Many difficulties naturally attended such an effort by an impoverished and distressed population; but, nevertheless, God blessed their devotion and sacrifice, and the building was finished and consecrated within three months after its commencement. So great was the emulation among the people, that even the old, the sick, and infirm assisted at the work; and it is told that many miraculously recovered their health while thus employed. No sooner had this church been completed than a total change was exhibited in the country. The hail and the tempest ceased to ravage; joy and abundance took the place of misery and desolation, and the exiled Béarnais was enabled to return to his native land, and sit down once more under his native roof-tree.

Many miracles are authoritatively recorded to have occurred through the intercession of our Lady of Piétat; but that which is regarded as the most wonderful is the total and sudden disappearance of heresy from the district, and the simultaneous return of the entire population to the ancient faith, so that, after the lapse of a short time, no one could tell what family had ever ceased to be Catholic. Two things, writes the Abbé Salles, powerfully contributed to the rapid prosperity of the pilgrimage of Piétat. The first was the zealous and pious administration of the

Curé of Pardies, who was assisted by the co-operation of holy priests, animated by his own spirit. At that period, when the souls of Christians had been as it were paralysed by the hydra of heresy, capable and devoted missioners were much needed; and such pre-eminently were the Abbé Brequé and his confrères. The second and principal cause of the popularity of this pilgrimage was the numerous miracles that were operated there, through the intercession of our Lady of Mercy.

Graces of all kinds were obtained by those who visited Piétat with faith and devotion: there, Mary loved to solace every affliction; there she exhibited herself especially as the 'succour of Christians,' *auxilium Christianorum*—a title wonderfully illustrated by the unexpected release of captives among the Moors, procured through prayers at her shrine at Couts. Here, also, she showed herself to be 'health to the sick,' *salus infirmorum*, as is testified by numerous instances of dying people rescued from the brink of the grave, and of perishing children restored to health and vigour. Here, above all, has she shown herself the 'refuge of sinners,' *refugium peccatorum*, as is proved by innumerable examples of aged sinners, whose hardened hearts have been melted into compunction and repentance at her shrine.

The report of these occurrences spread far and near, and from all parts pilgrims daily flocked to the holy 'Capère.'* Numerous processions attested the devotion of the neighbourhood, and in a short time the original chapel was found too small to accommodate the crowd of votaries. It therefore became necessary to enlarge it; but its modest architectural character has been much spoiled by these successive additions. It was thus that the inhabitants of Pardies received the reward of the sacrifices which they had cheerfully made in honour of our Lady, and in obedience to her directions, signified to the humble goatherd in the day of their distress. They lived holily and happily under the shadow of that blessed

* Chapel.

sanctuary, which they regarded as their palladium against all future ills, and they felt their greatest pride and consolation in the number of pilgrims who came daily to chant the praises of Mary upon their favoured hill.

But, alas! these days of peace and joy were soon to be turned into days of bitterness and mourning. The terrible outburst of 1789 enveloped Pardies and its sanctuary in the whirlwind. It seemed as if the awful times of the sixteenth century had been revived. The impious Revolution, not satisfied with destroying the monuments of religion, seized upon its possessions, and sacrilegiously appropriated them to its own purposes. The chapel and its dependencies were sold, but the people of Pardies, who loved this sanctuary as their lives, resolved to preserve it. More lucky than the people of Bétharram, they were successful with the Commissioners of the Directory. All the inhabitants of Pardies were constituted co-proprietors of the chapel of Piétat and its dependencies, with permission to perform divine service according to the Catholic rite, as professed by them and their predecessors. The document conveying this permission is one so rare in the history of those disastrous times, that I give an extract from it in the note below.* It required much courage, in those sanguinary days, to evince any respect for religion; but devotion and reliance upon Mary inspired confidence, and crowned the intrepidity of her votaries with success.

It would require much space to enumerate all the miraculous results that are recorded in authentic documents, as having taken place through the intercession of our Lady of Piétat in Bearn. I will confine myself to a few. In 1703, a woman of Sévignac, on the road to Eaux-Bonnes, had a child of three years old, which was deprived of the use of

* 'Les Sieurs Dufare et Bordenave reconnoissent tous les habitants de la commune de Pardies, de l'un et de l'autre sexe, qui y résident ou y résideront à l'avenir, et non autrement ou différemment, copropriétaires avec eux . . . de ladite chapelle de *Piétat*, des deux bâtiments séparés, des dix arpents de terre et des arbres y existants, *à l'effet d'y faire continuer le service du culte catholique, de tous les temps professé par les habitants susdits et leurs prédécesseurs, pendant différents jours de l'année consacrés à leurs actes religieux dans ladite chapelle.* 14 *Nivose, an V.*'

its limbs. It was always crying, had constant convulsions, never slept, and could not find rest either in its mother's arms or in bed. At last its mother bethought her to have recourse to our Lady of Piétat. She had scarcely approached the chapel when the infant became tranquil, fell asleep, and remained quiet while its mother went to confession and received holy Communion. It did not awake until they had come, on their return, to the spot at which it had fallen asleep; it never cried afterwards, except as other children might do, and was cured.

A man of the name of Bernadets, of Pau, had been confined to his bed during eight years by a sickness which tormented him night and day. He had been loose and irreligious in his manner of living; but, having been brought to a sense of his sinfulness by his sufferings, he became penitent, promised to lead a new life if he should recover, and resolved to make a pilgrimage to the chapel of Piétat. His friends were obliged to hold him on his horse during his journey thither. He confessed and received holy Communion, after which, to the astonishment of everyone, he walked back home, perfectly recovered, and glorifying God and his blessed Mother.

M. Brequé, Curé of Pardies, has left us an account of the following remarkable incident, which occurred in 1710. One day a man and woman from Oloron came to ask him to perform with them a Novena for their eldest son, from whom they had not received any news for a long time. This young man had gone to Spain, and they did not know what had become of him, and were inconsolable, believing that his silence must have been caused by some great misadventure. During the Novena they lodged in the village, and went daily to Piétat to hear Mass and perform their other devotions. The young man had been taken by the Moors and sold as a slave. He became the property of a powerful lord, with two other companions in misfortune. One of these committed an act that was punishable with death. The master did not know which of them was the guilty one, and therefore caused all three

to be imprisoned, ordering that it should be determined by lot which should die. The young Béarnais, in his dungeon, did not cease to invoke the aid of our Lady of Mercy at Piétat. The fatal day arrived. The nobleman gave a great fête; and, as distraction and entertainment for his guests, he desired that the captives should draw their lots of life and death, in their presence, after the banquet. Among these was a strange lady, with her daughter of eleven years of age. When the three slaves were brought forward, the little girl turned her youthful eyes upon the Béarnais, and was touched by his handsome figure and noble countenance, to which constant prayer had imparted an unusual illumination. She felt herself so much interested by him that she urged her mother to solicit for his pardon. The nobleman granted her request, and the young man was not only exempted from the perilous lottery, but obtained his full liberty. He was allowed to leave the country, and embarking on board a Portuguese ship, landed at Lisbon. As soon as he arrived he wrote to his family, telling them of his captivity, and ascribing his deliverance to our Lady of Piétat. When he was once more clasped in the embraces of his parents, and they talked over the circumstances of his release from captivity, they were struck profoundly at finding that the date of his delivery, as shown by his passport, coincided exactly with that of the Novena which they had performed at Piétat for his sake. A short time afterwards the entire family, accompanied by their grateful son, were seen kneeling at the foot of the statue of our Lady of Piétat, making their modest offerings in thanksgiving for his rescue from the hands of the heathen, and from imminent death, through her immediate and indisputable protection. This is but one instance among many that are recorded of similar unexpected delivery from slavery or prison, in consequence of prayers at this chapel.

It must be acknowledged that, in these our days, Piétat has become, through the misfortune of time, comparatively forgotten. The good Curé of Pardies, Abbé Salles, to

whose jurisdiction it still belongs, has no one to assist him in his spiritual labours; and, zealous and energetic as he is, he is physically unable to perform a duty that would require many coadjutors. With the exception of certain festivals, the venerable sanctuary is generally deserted, and the solitary chapel kept locked, under a triple bolt. However, as M. Salles remarks, in his interesting manuscript, 'It must be that our Lady of Mercy still loves to shed many graces upon those who invoke her here, since, in the absence of all external assistance, so many persons come daily from great distances, to look upon the holy Image, and address a prayer of supplication through the grating of the ancient treasury.'*

M. Lallier, in his 'Guide to the Pyrenees,' writes:—'From six in the morning, on festival days, this sanctuary overflows with the crowd of peasants who come from all sides; for the pilgrimage to Piétat, although less frequented than that of Bétharram, is still sacred to the native of Bearn. The miraculous water of a small fountain on the side of the hill, at a few steps from the chapel, is the attraction of the pilgrimage. This water has the property of preserving children from, and curing them of, all sickness; and thus may be seen countless mothers, with their children in their arms, or holding by their aprons, while they wash their little faces, and especially their foreheads, with the water of the fountain, before they present them to the priest for his blessing.'† It must be remembered that the more popular pilgrimages of Bétharram and Lourdes can now be reached from Pau by railroad, in almost as short a time as is required to make the ascent to Piétat.

Monseigneur Lacroix, the venerable Bishop of Bayonne, so full of zeal for the honour of Mary, is desirous that this shrine should be restored to its former importance, and has intimated his wish to give it all the stability and en-

* 'Il faut que Notre-Dame de Piétat ait bien des grâces à répandre sur ceux qui l'invoquent, puisque en l'absence de tout secours extérieur de religion, tant de personnes journellement viennent, toutefois de si loin, pour lui adresser une prière à travers la grille du trésor.'—M. Salles. (1862.)

† *Bains des Pyrénées*, par Justin Lallier, p. 21. (1857.)

couragement which it merits. The inhabitants of modern Pardies, like their ancestors, have received this announcement with enthusiasm, and a proposition has been under consideration to enable him to confide its direction to the missionaries of Garaison. As yet, however, there has been some difficulty in procuring the pecuniary means necessary for this desirable renovation. That it will succeed it is not permitted to doubt; and thus, once again, in this age so remarkable for its devotion to Mary Immaculate—in this country of the Pyrenees, so distinguished for its love of the Mother of God—every pious heart (and there are many) will rejoice at the restoration of a sanctuary which has survived so many changes of war and revolution, and, in its solitary widowhood, is still so sacred. Thus again will the devout Catholic from distant lands, who seeks for bodily health and prolonged life in the salubrious climate of Pau, find spiritual comfort and interior strength in the venerated and picturesque pilgrimage of NOTRE-DAME DE PIÉTAT. Beautifully has Lacordaire observed, in his exquisite life of Mary Magdalene: 'Il y a des lieux bénis par une prédestination qui se perd dans les secrets de l'éternité.' It is not without regret, that after many a wintry promenade, and many a soothing prayer upon that rough road, I turn away for the last time from Piétat, to find no rest, until, pursuing my pilgrimage into the distant valleys and holy hills, I kneel upon the stony floors of *Poëylahun.*

OUR LADY OF POËYLAHUN.

OUR LADY OF POËYLAHUN.

(VAL D'AZUN.)

Connaissez-vous le beau vallon d'Azun
Avec ses monts couverts d'une éternelle neige,
Avec ses prés fleuris et d'Arrens et d'Aucun
Que toujours bénit et protège
Notre-Dame de Poëylahun ?

LAGRÈZE, *La Fée d'Azun.*

'Un voyage à Notre-Dame de Poueylaün est un de ces événements qui, par la puissance de l'impression reçue, s'incorporent, si je puisse m'exprimer de la sorte, tellement en nous et y creusent leur empreinte si profondément, que rien dans l'avenir ne saurait l'effacer.'—L. GASSIE, *La Vallée d'Azun.*

WHO shall describe the lovely vale of Lavedan? I cannot. M. Taine, in his flippant and verbose volume, 'Voyage aux Pyrénées,' has not a word to say for Argèles, as the valley is generally called. Assuredly, it is not lack of language that has caused this silence; but even with him words are not colours, and he has not ventured to caricature by verbal description the ineffable charms of this luxuriant plain. From the battlemented towers and sacred grotto of *Lourdes*, at one end, to the picturesque and tranquil village of *Pierrefitte* at the other, it is one continuous avenue of exquisite and fragrant beauty; green meadows, golden corn, silvery streams, cultivated hills, backed by snow-capped mountains, ruined castles, ivied abbeys, peopled villages, flower-embosomed homesteads. Then there is the odour of shrubs, the song of birds, the freshness of the shade and the warmth of the sunlight. It was of this valley that Marguerite of Valois, Queen of Navarre, wrote:—'The beautiful prairie by the banks of the Gave,

where the foliage of the trees is so thick that the sun cannot pierce through its shade to enliven its freshness ('ce beau pré le long du Gave, où les arbres sont si feuillés que le soleil n'en sçauroit percer l'ombre ni eschauffer la fraîcheur!'). That distinguished traveller, my agreeable and romantic friend LE COMTE HENRI RUSSELL-KILLOUGH, in his popular 'Fortnight in the Pyrenees,'* writes of Argèles:—'Vine, fig-trees, cherry-trees, poplars, willows, elms, walnuts, maize, all meet here, and vegetation rises nearly to the tops of the mountains. On a fine day the whole thing looks like a modern Eden.'

At four o'clock on a brilliant morning in May, I stood on the balcony of the comfortable Hôtel de France, at the outskirts of the town of Argèles. The snow still capped the hoary heads of the mountains, Soulom and the Pic de Viscos; and as the approaching sunrise reddened the east and threw its reflection over the cold summits and along the steaming valley, there was an impression of grandeur and sublimity conveyed to the mind such as I had not experienced since, in my distant youth, I ranged the mighty Alps, and worshipped the new-born day upon the Righi's highest top. A short time after the return of my beloved and lamented friend, WILLIAM SMITH O'BRIEN, from banishment, I accompanied him on an excursion to one of the Kerry mountains, called *Cahirconreigh*.† There was a mist on the summit, and remaining at the foot of the peak, while he ascended to the top, I occupied myself with my

* *A Fortnight in the Pyrenees*, by Count Henri Russell-Killough, p. 26. Pau, 1868.

† '*Cahir-conrigh*, or *Cauir-conrigh*, i.e. the fortress of *Con-righ*, or King Con. On the top of this mountain is a circle of massy stones laid one on the other, in the manner of a Danish intrenchment; several of them are from eight to ten cubical feet, but they are all very rude. From the situation of the place it resembles a beacon, or place of guard to alarm the country; but from the prodigious size of the stones, it rather seems to be a monument of some great action performed near this place, or perhaps a sepulchral trophy raised over some eminent person. This piece of antiquity stands on the summit of a conical mountain, which is more than 700 yards above the level of the sea, and forms a kind of peninsula between two very fine bays; the country people, from the height and steepness of it and the largeness of the stones, will have it to be the work and labour of a giant, and it seems indeed wonderful how human strength, unassisted by engines, could possibly raise stones of such a prodigious weight to the summit of so steep and high a mountain.'—SMITH'S *History of Kerry*, p. 156.

beads. When he returned, and found me at prayer, he exclaimed, 'Right! Whenever I want especially to raise my heart to God, I seek some mountain-top like this: there is so much of divine inspiration in its sublimity, that every thought instinctively becomes a prayer.' A feeling akin to this arose within my own mind, as, after years of the world's contact, I beheld that glorious sunrise bursting over the sleeping vale of Argèles; and, renewing the emotions of my youth, it seemed for the moment to renew also its hopes and its affections. There was much natural piety in the mind of Smith O'Brien; but, unfortunately, he wanted the Catholic intelligence of prayer and expiation, although gifted with so many heroic and self-devoting qualities. Not only on the mountain-top at occasional intervals should it be exercised, but hourly in the depths of one's own heart and soul, in the secret chamber, in the crowded saloon, in the bustling streets, on the thronged highways, in the thorny by-ways of life.

If I have thus run riot in my admiration of the natural beauties of the vale of Argèles, I must not refuse a word of notice to that which to the Catholic traveller constitutes its greatest ornament, the church of ST. SAVIN, standing aloft upon the brow of a shady hill, and, with its monastery and chapel, looking like a stronghold of ancient religion. St. Savin, both from its former history and present condition, may be regarded as one of the 'sanctuaries of the Pyrenees.' I therefore will reserve a chapter to it, and in this place merely indicate it as one of the monumental features of the country.

Argèles, with all these attractions, is only a place for tourists to loiter their lazy day, or fishermen to cast their alluring fly. The object of my visit was the wilder valley of AZUN, and its ancient pilgrimage of NOTRE-DAME DE POËY-LA-HUN. Before the magnificent new road from Eaux-Bonnes over the Col de Tortes had been made, the valley of Azun was little visited and little known; and the quaint and interesting pilgrimage of Poëy-la-hun was scarcely celebrated beyond the villages that are enclosed

in its gorge. It is, notwithstanding, one of the most venerable and picturesque in the Pyrenees. The road from Argèles runs at the top of a wild narrow ravine, through which dashes, at the bottom of a deep precipice, the Gave d'Azun. Occasionally, quiet nooks of valleys strike off into the glaciers, and humble hamlets cluster together, suggesting the idea of seclusion and peace that one associates with pastoral life. The oak, the walnut, and chesnut-trees flourish, in healthy abundance, in the higher parts of the valley; while the more distant views are closed by the wild and snowy mass of the terrible *Balaïtous* (10,318 feet high), the Pic du Midi d'Arrens, the Pic du Midi d'Arrieugrand, and the Pic de Gaviso.

At the entrance of the valley, in a strong position to the right of the present road, are the remains of a castle, erected in feudal times, as much for the subjection as for the protection of the inhabitants, while at the other extremity stands a lonely chapel, consecrated to Her who is the Mother of the poor and the oppressed. The lordly castle has crumbled to the dust, and its proud banner waves no longer to the breeze; the lonely chapel stands erect, and still lifts its humble spire like a beacon to heaven. The château of Castelnau-d'Azun, of which these are the ruins, long occupied an important position, and held the lower part of the valley under control. It is said to have been at one time tenanted by the Black Prince, and is popularly known as *le château du prince noir*. The last remnant of its old barons perished in indigence, and there is not now a trace of a puissant family that had long defended the frontier against the Moors and the Spaniards, and been foremost among the deliverers of their country from the English yoke. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

Although savage and almost inaccessible in their valley, the inhabitants of Azun were visited, at an early period, by the missionaries of the gospel. Tradition still preserves the names of those saints who first came amongst them, and the memory of St. Bertrand de Comminges is still fresh in their veneration. It is recorded, however, that

his reception among their forefathers was not as respectful as it should have been, and that, upon one occasion, some malicious persons insulted the holy man, by cutting off the tail of his mule. In punishment of this outrage, the valley was afflicted by a famine, which ceased at the prayers of St. Bertrand, and an engagement upon their part to make annually an offering at his tomb of all the butter produced in the valley on the vigil of Pentecost. This tribute was regularly discharged until the Revolution; and, as an acknowledgment of their atonement and veneration, they received from the cathedral of Comminges a relic of the saint, which was conveyed through the valley with great ceremony and enthusiasm.

At Accun there is an interesting old church, dedicated to St. Felix, which possesses, over the high altar, a remarkable and vigorous coloured bas-relief, representing St. Felix being dragged on a hurdle by bullocks to martyrdom. Large high crosses bearing the emblems of the Passion, and most of them having a cock on the summit, become very numerous as one approaches the chapel and the village of Arrens. The latter is poor and irregular, its church low and dismal, but rendered remarkable by the fact of having still upon its steeple a sword-blade, that was put up there at the time of the Revolution to supersede the cross—a curious illustration of bloody history in so remote a corner! A gentleman from Toulouse has offered to restore the symbol of Redemption if allowed to possess the impious blade, but hitherto no one has been found sufficiently hardy to ascend the steeple for that purpose.

The chapel of Poëy-la-hun, with its college attached, becomes visible for some distance before one arrives at Arrens. It stands on a mamelon, immediately under the Pic d'Arrieugrand, and seems to close up the valley. Its appearance is highly picturesque. It is thus described in the lively 'Sketches' of a Protestant writer, who published his wanderings in the Pyrenees some thirty years ago:—'We went up to the chapel of Notre-Dame Pouey-la-Unt, beautifully set down upon a platform, overlooking

a world of sweet and serene aspect, and having for its rough pavement the rock on which it is built. A fissure runs through it, and when it rains, a stream through the fissure; but the walls are panelled brown and gold, the roof azure starred with gold, the pillars of the high altar twisted like those of the baldaquin of St. Peter's at Rome, gorgeously gilt and gracefully wreathed with vine-leaves and tendrils and bunches of grapes, all gold or its likeness. Over the porch is inscribed:

MOSTRA TE ESSE MATREM;

and the holy Mary, multiplied within in gilding and in silvering, is believed by the inhabitants of the valley, who do her humble homage, to show herself by many and sweet acts of love and graciousness to be indeed their mother. . . . The early Christians, compelled to worship in remote places, chose such spots as this, hidden from all eyes except those which looked down upon them from heaven, and prayed in the shadow of the valley or the hollow of the rocks, concealing the symbols of their faith, lest they should be exposed to profanation; but if surprised, dying for it joyfully.'*

The ascent to the sanctuary from the town is rugged and steep; the road skirts a fresh pellucid stream, and then winds up the hill, as if it were the zigzag approach to a mountain fortress. On the roadside there is a small chapel dedicated to St. Roch, for whom, as the patron and protector of cattle, these mountaineers have especial veneration. The date of the original chapel is not known,† but tradition records that it was rebuilt and remodelled at various periods. The present structure retains but little of its ancient style, and belongs rather to that of the Renaissance. A dome, which covers the choir, surmounts the church on the eastern, while a square low tower crowns it on the western side. The northern door is ornamented

* *Sketches in the Pyrenees*, vol. ii. p. 47. (1837.)

† 'Malgré d'actives recherches, il nous a été encore impossible de découvrir des documents écrits sur l'origine de cette chapelle et sur la date précise de sa fondation.'—GASSIE.

by a handsome porch, supported by four columns, which, with the choir and sacristy, is modern. The most ancient portion of the church is the nave, with its two lateral chapels, dedicated to St. Joseph and St. Anne. These chapels have been lately regilt. On the panel of the altar of St. Anne there is a curious series of bas-reliefs in gilded wood, representing the heads of the Apostles at the Last Supper. It is singular in its workmanship and location, and deserves attention. The high altar, the tabernacle, the pulpit, and the side altars are richly gilt, as described in the 'Sketches.' The statue of the blessed Virgin is of great antiquity, and is remarkable for its grace and lightness, as well as for the tenderness and sweetness of its expression. The retable or reredos is very fine and elaborately sculptured; the woodwork altogether disappearing beneath the exquisite variety of tiny ornamentation, which the artist has carved with a fineness of execution that is admirable. A number of shells constitute part of this ornamentation, as if indicating the chapel to be a place of pilgrimage.

But the most remarkable feature of the church is the floor. It is formed of the solid rock—rough, but worn and levelled by the feet of generations: at the western extremity it is elevated in the form of an amphitheatre, so that the altar may be seen distinctly by the persons kneeling at the end. I seldom have seen anything of the kind more remarkable than the massive solidity of this flooring. A stream ran across this floor for many years, and wore a channel which still remains, but the flow of water has been diverted to another direction. There was no one in the church when I first entered it; and as I knelt upon that cold enduring rock, and looked upon the contrast of the blue and gold, which enlivened it as if with a ray from the sky without, and bowed down before that venerable image and prayed for those I had left in distant lands—the living and the dead—the effect was as sublime as it was profound. I realised the sentiment, if not the fervour, which brings pilgrims to such spots, and it was long before

I could recall myself from that sweet meditation, in that lonely sanctuary, under the eternal snows.

There are two tribunes around the nave for the accommodation of the men, who, in the churches of Bigorre as well as in those of the Basque country, generally kneel apart from the females. The nave, formed by four double arches, *plein-cintre*, is only ten feet high and thirty feet in diameter. The space comprised between these arches is vaulted in wood, and these arch-roofs are constituted by several smaller arches *en ogive*, which terminate in a kind of pendant hanging from the middle of each joist. The moulding and the tailpiece of the pendants are gilt; the panels are painted blue.* The church was occupied for some time, during the Revolution, as a barrack to defend the Spanish frontier; and one sees the marks on the balustrades of the tribunes of the muzzles of the carbines—as if mischief and desecration were the habitual amusement of the ribald soldiery. When one recollects the poverty of this valley, one cannot be otherwise than astonished and edified at the costliness and taste with which their sanctuary had been adorned. Previous to the Revolution, columns, altars, statues, were richly gilt; at the present, they have recovered something of their former splendour, and offer pleasing evidence of the piety of the district as well as of the generosity of the pilgrims.

How has it happened that this wild and distant crag has become a place of resort and renown? I think I hear you ask, kind reader; and, in sooth, it is time that your curiosity should be gratified. This is the old tradition, which is religiously preserved and believed in the Val d'Azun and in all the Pyrenean land. About six hundred years ago there lived at *Arrens* an humble man, just and fearing God, who passed his days in prayer and labour. During three consecutive nights, that were very dark, he

* 'La nef, fermée par quatre arcs doubleaux plein-cintre, est de 3m. 40c. de hauteur de pied droit seulement sur 10m. 15c. de diamètre. Les espaces compris entre les arcs doubleaux sont voûtés en charpente, et ces voûtes sont faites par divers arcs en ogive, se terminant en une clé pendante au milieu de chaque travée. Les nervures et les culs-de-lampe des clés pendantes sont dorés; les panneaux sont peints en bleu.'—LAGRÈZE, *Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 124.

was surprised to see the hill of Poëy-la-hun suddenly illuminated with a brightness that expanded itself around in brilliant sparks, irradiating everything about. As may be supposed, these repeated visions produced upon his mind a profound impression, and directed by a secret inspiration, on the morning of the third night, he went to examine the spot where he had seen this vision. But there was nothing to show any trace of the illumination; there was no sign of light or fire upon the herbage or foliage—the grass and trees were green and unscorched. When he returned he sought some of his friends among the shepherds, and accompanied by them he mounted to the top of the mamelon; and there, at the foot of a granite rock, they beheld the image of the Virgin Mary, supernaturally suspended between earth and sky, holding in her arms the divine Infant. Astonished and seized with fear, they returned immediately to the village of Arrens, and recounted what they had seen. The people hastened after them to the spot, and on beholding the image all cried out, with one voice, 'A miracle! A miracle!' and, in their pious covetousness, endeavoured to carry away with them the wondrous treasure. But their efforts were unavailing; a secret power resisted them, and they could not remove from the spot the present which Heaven had sent. But their ardent faith enabled them quickly to comprehend the design of Providence. They set to work, and constructed a rustic oratory upon the very spot, in which they placed, as in a shelter, the mysterious image. They designated it, at the same time, by a name which should perpetuate the tradition of the marvellous event, and they called it Our Lady of Poueylaün.*

The rumour of this prodigy soon circulated throughout the neighbouring valleys, and pilgrims came from all directions to implore comfort in their sorrows and relief in

* Poueylaün, or Poëy-la-hun, is derived from the words *pouey*, which signifies in the idiom of the country a little hill, and *Laun*, the name of a rivulet which formerly flowed at the foot of the hill, and which now passes near the village of Arrens, its course being somewhat diverted from its former channel under the hill.

their maladies. The little oratory could no longer accommodate the influx of pious visitors, nor find place for their offerings. Their generosity, however, soon transformed the lonely shrine into a handsome church, remarkable for its elegance and size, and constituting a monument to their piety and zeal.

I have searched carefully the public libraries and archives of Pau and Tarbes, and have not been able to find any account of the condition of Our Lady of Poëylahun during the 'wars of religion,' nor yet during the long period which intervened between that disastrous epoch and the great Revolution. M. de Lagrèze tells us also that he has been equally unsuccessful in his researches.* We have reason, however, to conclude that this sanctuary was protected by its remoteness, and thus escaped the ravages of the Huguenots; but, unhappily, we have too much evidence that the echoes of 1789 resounded in the valleys of Azun, and that the hatchet of devastation descended upon the altars of Poëy-la-hun. The inhabitants of Arrens were slow to appreciate the benefits which the philosophy of the day offered them in exchange for the consolations of their old faith; nor did they set much value on the new liberty, imported by the Revolution, in place of their ancient laws and customs.

Their seclusion did not protect them from invasion and desecration: an order was issued to close the church and destroy the statue of the Virgin of Poëylahun. But in defiance of this ukase, the miraculous statue retained its position and attraction. Emissaries, strangers in the neighbourhood, were commissioned to execute the order of the Directory; but the news of their visit and its object had preceded them, and filled the country with alarm. Although their entrance into the chapel was announced by horrid oaths and curses, they soon became serious and repressed their blasphemies. Terrible voices assailed them from the summit of the roof, as if Heaven re-

* 'Il n'existe, que je sache, aucune notice sur Notre-Dame-de-Poëylahun, et je n'ai pu retrouver aucune trace de ses anciennes archives.'—*Note*, p. 134.

proached their sacrilege; strange sounds mingled with their impious vociferations; spectres and phantoms seemed to float about them, until overcome by sudden panic these brave *patriots* fled, and left the image and the altar uninjured. However, these apparitions and sounds were not supernatural; they were the result of a stratagem employed by the Azunois to terrify the intended iconoclasts, in which they completely succeeded. M. de Lagrèze, in his notice of the sanctuary, tells us that he had heard this story from many of the inhabitants, and that the old men loved to recount it by their winter firesides.

It was about this period that the chapel was occupied as a barrack, for the protection of the frontier on the Spanish side, and that the wild soldiery left the impression of their muskets upon the balustrades. It is recorded, among the traditions of the place, that the women of Arrens disguised themselves as Spanish soldiers, attacked the garrison, and drove them ignominiously from their post. Such gallantry is in accordance with that heroic spirit which in former times avenged itself upon the procurator of Bigorre, who, attempting to invade their privileges, was unceremoniously flung over a yawning precipice. The spot thus illustrated in the history of its independence is pointed out to travellers at the opening of the valley, and is called *le saut du procureur*, or the procurator's leap.

The chapel and its dependencies were sold, as national property, and purchased by the commune of Argèles for twelve hundred francs. But when the purchasers arrived on the plateau, and announced their intention of levelling the chapel, they were attacked by showers of stones and loud execrations. The daughters of Arrens, reinforced by some Spanish women, full of zeal for '*la santísima Virgen purísima*,' repelled those speculators, who, yielding to this demonstration, sought safety in flight and the abandonment of their unholy project. Some time afterwards, a pious widow of Arrens, Madame Anne Glère, became purchaser of the chapel for fifteen hundred francs, which constituted almost her entire property; and at this

sacrifice, she rescued the sacred spot from further profanation. At her death she bequeathed it to her nephew, the Abbé Pome, who sold it to the municipality of Arrens; and thus, for some time, the sanctuary was the private property of the commune, who ultimately assigned it as a gift to Monseigneur Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes.

His lordship, with that zeal which he exhibits in all that can promote the honour of our Lady, has undertaken the repairs of this sanctuary and restored it almost to its former splendour. There is attached to it a seminary for the education of the boys of the valley, which is placed under the direction of the Missionary Fathers of Garaison. One of them, with that *bienséance* which is habitual to them, accompanied me through the church and monastery, and gave me all the information which he possessed regarding them; which, however, was not very ample. The situation, in summer, is lovely: a pleasant hill, covered with hamlets and browsing flocks, rises in front; the quaint town of Arrens lies beneath, and behind tower the everlasting peaks with their perpetual snow. In winter it must be very bleak and dreary, with little to interrupt study or meditation.

At a period, 1807, when many combinations threatened this sanctuary with ruin, it was visited by the Queen Hortense, and she has left the following impressions of her visit. She had recently lost her eldest son, the Prince Royal of Holland.—'Who is there that has not felt deep emotion upon first entering a church after the loss of an object that has been dear to one! To the church man is brought at his birth; at the church he makes his most solemn engagements; in the church the last prayers are said for his departed soul. The world soon forgets him, but a mother never forgets; and thus the church brings back to her all the emotions which have agitated her, developing her regrets and increasing her sorrows.'* In

* 'Après la perte d'un objet cher, qui n'a pas éprouvé une émotion profonde en entrant dans une église! C'est là que l'homme est conduit en naissant; c'est là qu'il prend les engagements les plus sacrés, et c'est là que l'on dit pour lui la dernière prière. Le monde l'oublie après; mais une mère n'oublie rien.

this spirit she exerted herself to procure the restoration of the chapel to the devotion of the public; and recommending her family to the protection of our Lady of Poëylahun, she founded an anniversary Mass in perpetuity for the repose of the soul of her eldest son, to whose loss she alludes so pathetically in the foregoing extract.

Her pious injunction was received with thanksgiving, and we find the Abbé Pome, then owner and chaplain of the sanctuary, giving to her Majesty an account of the first anniversary Mass, which was celebrated on May 5, 1808, in the following terms:—'I hasten to inform your Majesty that, conformably with your wishes, a solemn Mass was celebrated in the church of Poëy-la-hun, on the 5th of the current month of May, with all the pomp which circumstances allowed. That day, which should have been one of mourning, by recalling the memory of a prince born to be the successor of the great Napoleon, has become a day of joy and gratitude through the birth of another prince, who, generated in our mountains, and, if I may presume to say so, under the protection of the Virgin, has dried up all our tears, reanimated our courage, and become the object of our most flattering hopes. . At a civic banquet toasts were drunk to the Emperor and Empress of the French, to the King and Queen of Holland, *to the young prince*, to the préfet, and to all those who have contributed to reopen the sanctuary of Poëy-la-hun.'* This 'young prince' was Louis Napoleon, the present Emperor of the French. The protection of our Lady of Poëylahun would seem never to have deserted him through all his adventures and dangers; and with some knowledge of his life and heart, I venture to hope that the same benign eye may watch over his future career unto the end. Many results of his eventful course can be understood, when regarded by the light of the lamp in the mountain shrine which his mother's hands had rekindled.

Tout vient rappeler à son cœur les diverses émotions qui l'ont agité, et tout accroît ses regrets et sa douleur.'

* *Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 131. Appendix II.

The people of this valley are remarkable for the veneration which they preserve for their ancient customs. M. de Lagrèze tells us that they believe that their old laws and practices have descended to them almost unaltered from the primitive ages of the world.* It had been the custom formerly in these valleys to bury their dead in the cemetery of St. Savin, but after a time the inhabitants of Azun naturally began to desire that the remains of their relatives should be interred with them, and refused at an early date to comply with this obligation. In 1131, a certain Calvet, of Arrens, having died, his friends buried him at Marsens privately, and without the presence of a priest. This caused great scandal and commotion. The monks of St. Savin carried their complaint before the Count of Bigorre, and he condemned the offenders to pay a fine of one hundred sols to himself and a similar sum to the monastery, and he obliged them to exhume the body of Calvet, although putrefied, and transfer it to the graveyard at St. Savin. The Azunois engaged thenceforward to continue dutiful lieges of the monastery; and swore solemnly, their hands joined upon the tomb of the saint, that if any person among them should attempt to disregard the rights of the monastery, in the matter of sepulture or otherwise, they would unite as one man in their defence. This privilege of exclusive burial existed until the Revolution, which not only overthrew all such rights, but robbed the grave itself.

Certain usages of the inhabitants, combined with traces on old monuments, induce us to believe that the blessed Virgin, when she made known her desire to be venerated at Poëylahun, at the same time inspired her votaries there with a peculiar affection for her mother, St. Anne. Thus there is an altar to St. Anne in the church; and at the foot of the hill on which it stands, on the road to Spain, there was formerly a small chapel, dedicated to St. Anne, but which was destroyed in 1793. According to tradition,

* 'Le peuple de ces montagnes se figurait que ses vieilles coutumes remontaient aux premiers temps du monde.'—*Hist. religieuse de la Bigorre*, p. 255.

all travellers that passed this chapel stopped to pray and place their journey under the protection of the blessed Virgin and her mother. If any accident befell them on their passage of the mountains, they again invoked the aid of St. Anne, and generally accompanied their invocation with a vow to perform a pilgrimage or make an offering in her honour. The shepherd also sought her shrine to implore her protection for his flock, the farmer for his herds, and he generally devoted to her service his first lamb or his first fleece, or sometimes his first cheese. Mothers were in the habit of consecrating to her their children at their birth, and, if girls, they always added the name of Anne.

In 1793, this wayside chapel of St. Anne shared the fate of most of the other sanctuaries in France; having been sacrilegiously plundered, it was razed to the ground. Notwithstanding its destruction, the people of the valley continued to uncover their heads as they passed the once sacred spot, making the sign of the cross and pronouncing the name of St. Anne, which they had learned to lisp so reverently in their pious infancy. On the great festivals, when the population of Arrens and the valley were wont to pay their devotions to our Lady at Poëylahun, they used invariably to repair to the site of the old chapel, and there, in touching recollection of the past, offer up a silent prayer, and drop a tear over the desolate ruin. God, in his inscrutable wisdom, permitted the revolutionary Vandals to overthrow the sanctuaries of stone and mortar, but it was not allowed to them to destroy that inner sanctuary which has its foundations in the heart.

The devotion to St. Anne has once more vigorously revived throughout the valley of Azun, where indeed it never had been entirely dormant. Mgr. Laurence has been enabled to give to the parish a relic of St. Anne, which he had brought from Rome in 1837, and which on all great festivals is presented to the affectionate veneration of the faithful. Since that period, numerous and extraordinary graces have been obtained through Novenas

offered or Masses said at her altar where her relic is kept. In order further to extend devotion to the mother of our Lady, and more perfectly embody the ancient sentiment of the people of Azun, a confraternity under the patronage of St. Anne was canonically instituted at Poëylahun on December 8, 1858. It was extended throughout the diocese of Tarbes, was welcomed in most of the adjoining dioceses, and became aggregated to the associations of the Sacred Heart and of the Apostolate of Prayer in Rome, to both of which many indulgences are attached.

The especial object of this confraternity are, first, to encourage and extend devotion to St. Anne; secondly, to form good mothers, by instructing young females in their duties and by establishing in the household the spirit of domesticity and of piety; thirdly, to warn and preserve young women against all dangerous occasions, to inspire them with desire to frequent the sacraments, to imbue them with a spirit of respect and obedience towards their parents, of forbearance and charity towards their neighbours; and, fourthly, to obtain, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin and her mother, the grace of a happy death. Each associate is recommended to cultivate great confidence in the powerful protection of their patronesses, both of whom are perfect examples equally for married life or for Christian virginity; and they are exhorted to an imitation of their virtues, especially their modesty, their love of prayer, their attention to their household duties, their chastity, their charity, and their zeal for the salvation of souls.

The centre of the confraternity is at the church of Our Lady of Poëylahun; its privileged altar is that of St. Anne in this church, and an indulgence of forty days can be obtained by visiting this altar and venerating the relic with the proper dispositions and on the usual conditions. The director of the confraternity is Father Ferrère, Superior of the missionaries residing at Poëylahun, a man as remarkable for his high intelligence as for his profound piety and devotedness of life. He assured me that within

the last four years, more than one hundred persons have reported to him the account of extraordinary graces or favours received through the intercession of St. Anne: sometimes the conversion of an unbelieving friend; sometimes an unexpected cure; sometimes a law-suit happily terminated when least expected; sometimes an afflicted family consoled when all hopes seemed to have abandoned it. Father Ferrère has drawn up and published an interesting account of this confraternity in the form of a little book entitled 'Pieuses Exercices en l'honneur de sainte Anne, ou Manuel de la Confrérie établie à Poeylaun sous le patronage de cette sainte,' which I venture to recommend to the attention of my Irish and English Catholic readers. The edification which I have received in studying this devotion, so beautifully organised and so successful in the remote Val d'Azun, has inspired me with the wish to assist in its extension; and I trust that this modest notice of it may not be without benefit to many others as well as to myself. I remember to have seen in the picture gallery at Madrid a charming picture by Murillo, St. Anne teaching the blessed Virgin to read; the matronly mother seated, the predestined child looking up into her face, all meekness and attention. The expression and the features strikingly resemble those of another far-off child that is very dear to me; and, influenced by the twofold feeling, I was wont to return daily and contemplate, with sweet affection, this most exquisite *chef-d'œuvre*, one of the tenderest inspirations of that sublime master. A copy of it would be a suitable offering to the confraternity at Poëylahun.

The great *fête* is on September 8, on which day the valley resounds to the hymns of pilgrims from far and near. In 1857 this festival was kept with peculiar *éclat*, the bishop of the diocese assisting in person. M. Gassie, a native of Arrens, and author of 'La Vallée d'Azun et ses Avenues,' gives a graphic description of this event. 'From the eve,' he writes, 'numerous pilgrims had arrived at Arrens; on the morning of the festival countless crowds might be seen descending every mountain path, while long

processions of people from the valley of Lavedan and from the various watering-places in the Pyrenees, followed each other on the route from Argèles, accompanied by all the harmony of sacred songs and local *cantiques*. The voices no doubt were wild and rude, the choristers panting and dust covered, but the energy of their faith and the tenderness of their devotion were not the less admirable and touching. Monseigneur Laurence officiated pontifically and administered holy Communion to an innumerable multitude. The religious offices being finished about four o'clock, they began to think of returning to their homes; and forming themselves into different groups they intoned a *cantique* in front of the chapel, and took their departure chanting and praying. The features of this *fête* were similar to all those that take place at Poëylahun; in their simplicity and earnestness presenting a striking contrast to the more gorgeous festivals of noisy and luxurious cities. Here everything was calm, peaceful, and devotional. We need never despair of a people where such *fêtes* can be celebrated with such emotion and fervour. It is the evidence that faith still flourishes amongst them, and faith is the life of nations no less than of individuals—'la foi est la vie des nations comme celle des individus.' *

Having bade a long adieu to this attractive spot, and loitered in the mid-day heat by the cool stream that flows beside it, I descended to Arrens and called upon the curé, the Abbé LACALLE. He received me with accustomed urbanity, and gave me an interesting account of the sanctuary, and of the manners and habits of the people of Azun, much of which I have embodied in this sketch. There exists among them great devotion to St. Anne and St. Joseph; the feast of the former, July 26, on which day I am writing these pages, being one of their great festivals. The names most common in the valley are those of Joseph, Peter, and John, Anne, Mary, Josephine, and Mary-Anne; and these names he considers to have been inherited and perpetuated from the days of the first

* *La Vallée d'Azun et ses Avenues*, par L. Gassie, juge de paix. Tarbes, 1859.

Christian missioners. They are remarkably chaste and sober; and before the high road from Argèles to Eaux-Bonnes was made (that is almost twenty years ago), coffee and brandy were luxuries altogether unknown in the valley. They hold their farms as proprietors; are active in the improvement of the land, but devote their principal attention to rearing cattle, cultivating only so much tillage as may be necessary for their own consumption. Except when the season happens to be very unfavourable, they live comfortably but moderately. However, the love of change and the desire to better their fortunes have penetrated with the new roads into Azun, and occasional members of its happy families are to be seen on the quays of Bordeaux or Bayonne, about to swell the horde of continental emigration. If they succeed in realising a small sum, these emigrants, after a few years' absence, generally return to their native hamlets. The Azunois are remarkable for their fidelity and affection as husbands, and for the respect and deference with which they treat their wives. It ought to be a paradise for amiable young women, as marriages are arranged with reference to the character and qualities of the bride rather than to the amount of her fortune. The women generally are distinguished by the regularity of their features, the sympathetic expression of their countenances, their handsome teeth, graceful figures, and strong constitutions. If they become widows, they rarely marry a second time; they are warm in their attachment and ardent in their grief; and she who seeks consolation for her tears in new affections is not well regarded by her neighbours. The same abnegation does not exist among the men; for woman, even in Azun, proves how much more profound are the depths of her love and of her sorrow.

A writer whom I have already quoted says:—'There may be bits in their valley which do not perhaps quite sustain its general character of Eden-like beauty, but there are also scenes of pastoral sweetness, of mountain depth and peacefulness, that it would be difficult to over-

praise. The valley of Azun is chiefly grass or pasturage, but a little of everything is cultivated ; not a grange without its broad tree or broader clump, scarcely one without its rapid brook.' *

M. de Lagrèze poetically describes the manners of this valley as follows :—

Le Val d'Azun avait ses juges et sa loi,
Et hors de la vallée, on n'était plus chez soi ;
On aimait ses enfants. on vénérait son père ;
Ayant peu de désirs, on se trouvait heureux ;
Avec respect on gardait la chaumière
Où l'on avait vu mourir ses aïeux !

Le soir près du foyer se pressait la famille ;
On parlait des troupeaux, des champs, des près, des bois ;
Le jeune homme chantait avec la jeune fille,
Le vieillard répétait l'histoire d'autrefois.
On tressaillait d'orgueil à des récits de gloire !
Ces monts furent témoins de plus d'une victoire ;
Les braves enfants du pays
Surent aider Roland et Charlemagne
A refouler du côté de l'Espagne
Les ennemis du Christ, les Sarrasins maudits.†

A fairy legend, that resembles the German Undine, is current in the homesteads of Azun. It has been gracefully rendered into verse by M. de Lagrèze, in the poem from which I have made the foregoing extract, and which crowns his graver productions as historian, archæologist, and jurist, with the softer wreath of poetry. There existed, once upon a time, in the Val d'Azun a fairy of surpassing beauty and gentleness, 'brillante de beauté,' but she was condemned by a cruel destiny to pass her life at the bottom of a lake—

Un grand lac entouré d'ombrage et de mystère,
Et réflétant le ciel dans ses flots toujours bleus—

until some one should seek her in marriage, who having ate should still be fasting—

Après avoir mangé pourra se dire à jeun.

It happened one day that a certain Abbadie de Sireix, while walking over his farm, desired to ascertain whether

* *Sketches in the Pyrenees*, vol. ii. p. 58. (1837.) † *La Fée d'Azun*, p. 3.

the grains of corn were fully ripe, and breaking one of them between his teeth threw it out of his mouth without swallowing. Thus inadvertently he fulfilled the seemingly impossible condition which retained the fairy in her reedy cell. As he returned home he passed by the lake, when suddenly there rose from the bosom of the waters a beautiful creature, glowing with youth and loveliness, and approaching the astonished Abbadie, offered herself to him, in love and gratitude, as his wife.

> Je vais quitter ce lac, mon domaine maudit,
> L'amour a triomphé! Je suis heureuse et libre,
> Je puis t'aimer enfin, te le dire et te suivre,
> Je te donne ma main, et je reçois ta foi.
> N'as-tu pas ce matin, quand tu songeais à moi,
> Goûté ce grain de blé cueilli sur la montagne?
> Et cependant encore on peut te dire à jeun.
> Hâtons-nous de descendre à ton vallon d'Azun,
> Je t'appartiens . . . . .

Dazzled by her charms Abbadie accepted the offer, to which was annexed the condition that he should never allude to her former state, under penalty of losing her immediately and for ever.

> . . . de mon destin écoute bien la loi,
> Mon passé, mon nom même, il faut que tout s'oublie,
> Je fus *Dame de l'Onde*. Oh! ne dis plus ce mot!
> Si tu le prononçais, je fuirais aussitôt
> Comme une vision, dans l'air évanouie.

For years they lived together in happiness and prosperity, until upon some thoughtless provocation he uttered her fairy name and reproached her with her origin, whereupon she instantly vanished and disappeared beneath the cold waters. It is said that, impelled by love and interest for the children she had left behind, she returned once to visit them, and told them that their race was destined to undergo many trials, but ultimately would become the parent of kings. To this alliance of mortal and immortal the poet traces the origin of the house of Bernadotte, which at present occupies the throne of Sweden; and the historian remarks, in the language of the true courtier,

that it is not necessary to have recourse to fairy lore to discover much that is wonderful in the life and successes of Bernadotte:—'Sans recourir à la féerie, n'y a-t-il pas assez de merveilleux dans la vie de notre illustre Béarnais ?'*

> Azun s'est souvenu de cette prophétie,
> BERNADOTTE descend des enfants d'Abbadie.
> La Fée avait prédit la vérité,
> Et les beaux rêves d'or de la vieille féerie
> Sont encore effacés par la Réalité.†

The geological constitution of the Val d'Azun is very remarkable. Granite forms the kernel (*noyau*) of the mountains, while close to the Jurassic formation schistous rocks are found. The remains of numerous mines, which had been worked at distant epochs, may still be seen. M. Dyetrich, a celebrated engineer, states that there are no less than fifty different strata of minerals in the valley—silver, iron, copper, lead, zinc, and cobalt; and the entire conformation betokens some former terrible convulsion of nature. Eternal snow rests upon the highest peaks, its lowest limit being about 9,000 feet. The climate is less severe than that of Switzerland, and during the summer is one of the most delicious and healthful in the world.

Its flora is varied and abundant, and many of its flowers resemble those found in the Alps. The rhododendron flourishes at a height of 5,400 feet; but above this plants and flowers become stunted and uninviting. The isard, which becomes yearly more scarce, is still found in these mountains, but it is difficult of pursuit and cannot be successfully followed, except by active and experienced sportsmen. The shepherd-dog, which also is rapidly becoming extinct in the Pyrenees, still exists in considerable variety; and the Pyrenean eagle, the kite, quail, woodcock (*coq de bruyère*), and snipe are to be found in company with the smaller tribes of birds. The swallow is regarded with particular fondness, and its presence about a house is considered to be an omen of good fortune.

* Lagrèze, *Le château de Pau*, p. 257. † *La Fée d'Azun*, p. 16.

The number and variety of insects are considerable, and offer a rich prize to the adventurous entomologist. In the middle of the glaciers even are to be found some rare specimens of the glacial carabus, the pyrenaïcus, the cristofortes, and the argutus amoroïdes. It should not be omitted to mention that the streams abound with delicious trout, of which I had a specimen at my pleasant breakfast in the new Hôtel de France. Perhaps I have dwelt too long in this remote valley; but its scenery, its people, their habits, and their history, its pilgrimage and its legends have so interested me, that I can only hope my readers, on laying down this chapter, will form a resolution to follow in my footsteps, and make their next summer ramble a pilgrimage to St. Anne and Notre-Dame de Poëylahun.

I conclude this sketch by addressing the simple shepherds of Azun, as did an eminent compatriot of theirs, in the language of a French poet, M. J. Autran.

Aux voix qui vous diront la ville et ses merveilles,
N'ouvrez pas votre cœur, paysans, mes amis.
A l'appel des cités n'ouvrez pas vos oreilles;
Elles donnent, hélas! moins qu'elles n'ont promis.

A vos champs, à vos bois demeurez donc fidèles;
Aimez vos doux vallons, aimez votre métier,
Auguste est le travail de vos mains fraternelles,
C'est de votre sueur que vit le monde entier.

Qu'elle est hideuse à voir, la misère des villes!
De quels affreux haillons ses membres sont vêtus!
Que d'opprobres en elle et de passions viles!
La pauvreté rustique est mère des vertus.

SAINTE ANNE DE POEYLAUN.

Refrain.

Mère de notre auguste Mère,
Sainte Anne, écoute nos accents,
Daigne bénir notre prière
Et reçois-nous pour tes enfants. } *Bis.*

Enfants de la contrée,
Courez à son autel,
Où l'âme consolée
Goûte la paix du ciel.

Dans son humble chapelle,
Sainte Anne, à pleines mains,
Répand sur le fidèle
Tous les trésors divins.

C'est là que, dès l'enfance,
Nos fortunés aïeux
Ont vu de sa puissance
Les effets merveilleux.

La veuve désolée
Lui révèle son cœur,
Et son âme accablée
Retrouve le bonheur.

A sa main vigilante
Confiant son troupeau,
Le berger prie et chante
Sans craindre de fléau.

Dans ta fureur cruelle,
Voyageur égaré,
Par sa voix maternelle
Tu te sens rassuré.

Le pauvre qu'on condamne,
L'affligé, l'orphelin,
Tous trouvent en sainte Anne
Un refuge certain.

ST. ANNE OF POËYLAHUN.

Chorus.

Mother of Her we claim as ours,
August St. Anne, our accents hear,
And while our heart in prayer outpours,
Receive us as thy offspring dear. } *Rep.*

Children of the country round,
Unto her altar speed,
Where heavenly peace is found,
Consoling the soul's need.

At her humble shrine,
St. Anne, with bounteous hand,
Bestows her gifts divine,
Upon faith's suppliant band.

And here, from childhood's dawn,
Our sires this pathway trod,
To see the wonders done
By her great power with God.

The widow in her grief
To her reveals her heart;
She, comfort and relief
Doth to her soul impart.

To her all-vig'lant care
The shepherd trusts his herd;
And, mingling song with prayer,
By him no plague is feared.

Her voice maternal calls
The wanderer to the path,
When fear his sense appals,
And thought of lonely death.

The wretch condemned to die,
The orphan, sick and poor,
To dear Saint Anna cry,
And refuge find and cure.

Mais surtout sa tendresse
S'étend sur le pécheur,
Qui la prie et la presse
De fléchir le Seigneur.

Je ne puis, ô ma Mère,
Raconter les bienfaits
Dont ce lieu solitaire
Conserve les secrets.

But most her tenderness
Is to the sinner shown,
When he doth pray and press
For mercy at God's throne.

Oh! never could my tongue,
Mother, recount each grace,
Whose secret lives among
The memories of this place!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF HÉAS.

OUR LADY OF HÉAS.

(VAL DE HÉAS.)

'On dirait que l'Éternel, pour se jouer des ouvrages des hommes, forma l'amphithéâtre de Gavarnie.'—M. ARBANÈRE, *Tableau des Pyrénées*, tom. ii. p. 51.

'Divine Mère, lorsque vous daignâtes inspirer à quelqu'un de vos bien-aimés serviteurs la pensée de vous élever un sanctuaire au milieu de ces montagnes, vous aviez certainement en vue, non-seulement les bergers qui les habitent, mais encore les pécheurs qui viendraient les visiter. Montrez donc, ô très-miséricordieuse Marie, que vous êtes la mère des uns et des autres: sauvez les premiers de tout danger du corps et de l'âme; retirez les seconds de l'abîme du péché, pour les établir solidement dans la grâce. MONSTRA TE ESSE MATREM.'—*Val et Chapelle de Notre-Dame de Héas.*

GAVARNIE! 'Have you seen Gavarnie? When shall we go to Gavarnie?' At last the desired day was fixed, and a carriage, at thirty-five francs, engaged from the hostess of the Hôtel de France. But there was thick fog upon the hills and chilliness in the atmosphere, and the aspect of the weather forbade the excursion. Although a contract for a carriage for similar excursions is understood to be conditional on the state of the weather, our *patronne*, in this instance, would fain insist upon being paid the day's hire. We resisted, and having appealed to the conscience of the commissaire de police, he decided with some hesitation against his petulant countrywoman and in our favour. But our visit to sublime Gavarnie was not to be frustrated either by the weather or any effort at imposition; and a few days subsequent to this little adventure, on a glowing morning in August, I started from bleak Barèges with a pleasant French party.

Nothing can be more picturesque than the road from Luz to Gavarnie, a distance of twenty kilomètres, or twelve English miles, but which occupied us four hours to

travel. The road itself is a narrow shelf, cut on the face of a rocky precipice, from which one looks down a depth of four hundred feet into the foaming river that rushes wildly between the half-opened fissures below. One difficult pass around the shoulder of the mountain is called *Pas d'Échelle*; because, before the present road was made, it was traversed by a dangerous staircase, ascending as by a ladder on one side, and descending in a similar fashion at the other side. At this spot the undisciplined peasants of Bigorre defeated, in 1708, a force of Spanish troops, who had invaded the frontier and threatened havoc to the soldiers of Louis XIV. The whole of the road as far as Gédre presents an astonishing variety of scenery, the grandest combined with the softest; umbrageous woods alternating with naked rocks, mountain peaks of fantastic shapes rearing their heads aloft, while underneath gapes and yawns a fearful chasm. The road itself is uncomfortably narrow, and in many places not sufficiently fenced; so that, as the carriage rolls close to the verge, the timid traveller feels his head grow giddy, and criticises the parsimony which the commune has displayed in providing for his security.

On approaching the picturesque but scattered village of Gédre, one gets a fine view of the snow-capped mountain called Tours de Marboré, and of the Brèche de Roland, a gap in the wall of rock which crowns the mountain, and which Murray, in his guide book, describes as 'looking like a notch in a jaw caused by the loss of a single tooth.' According to the legend, Roland cut the rock in twain with his trusty blade Durandal, and thus opened a passage for his warriors in pursuit of the Moors. Our journey was made in the company of a warm-hearted French navy captain of the name of Rolland, who on this occasion took justifiable precedence from his nominal affinity with the mighty paladin. As I had recently visited another scene of his exploits, at the Pas de Roland, near charming Cambo,* and, again, made a pilgrimage to his tomb in

* Cambo is a most lovely retreat, on a spur of the Pyrenees, by the river

the verdant valley of Roncesvalles, all my recollections of heroic lore crowded about me in presence of the grand Pyrenean crest, which bears his fame to the clouds. I might have cried out, not inaptly, in the stirring language of the poet:—

> Superbes Pyrénées, qui dressent dans le ciel
> Vos cimes, couronnées d'un hiver éternel,
> Pour nous livrer passage, ouvrez vos larges flancs,
> Faites taire les orages: voici venir les Francs.
>
> MÉRIMET, *Roland de Roncesvaux.*

The road to Gavarnie from Gédre, a distance of about seven kilomètres, is a masterpiece of engineering. It is a continual ascent, and skirts the flanks of the mountain Coumélie, thickly covered with the box shrub, until it reaches the Chaos or Peyrada, constituted by masses of broken gneiss fallen from above, and looking as though a mountain had tumbled to pieces. This is truly grand in its vastness and devastation; the size of the rocks is prodigious, their shapes most fantastic, and frequently representing the figures of mammoths, mastodons, and other uncouth animals. Three great avalanches are recorded to have fallen, at various periods, from the top of the mountain, leaving behind them masses of disembodied rock, shattered and flung about in the most terrifying confusion. 'A mountain in ruins,' observes M. Taine, 'is a scene of greater desolation than any other known ruin.' I will borrow his description, as we read it while traversing this scene, and can vouch for its graphic accuracy. 'A hundred steps farther on and the aspect of the valley becomes formidable. Herds of mammoths and strange antediluvian monsters lie on the eastern side, as it were marshalled along the declivity. Their colossal backs reflect a dark ferruginous colour, while the largest of them stretch their huge bulk away, as if to imbibe the waters of the river far below. They appear to be warming their bronzed skins in the sun, and to lie asleep in attitudes at once gigantic

Nive, at twelve miles' distance from Biarritz. There are iron baths and springs there, and two excellent hotels, with most delicious scenery and an interesting neighbourhood.

and terrifying. Their deformed paws are doubled under them, their bodies are half buried in the earth, and they seem to support their enormous backs upon each other. When one enters this assemblage of prodigies, the horizon disappears, blocks of rock rise fifty feet in the air and overshadow the sky: the road winds with difficulty through the impending obstacles; men and horses dwindle to the semblance of dwarfs, while the dark array that overhangs them seems ready to crush the human insects that trespass upon their repose.' It is supposed that the catastrophe which produced these results took place in the sixth century on the occasion of a great earthquake, recorded by Gregory of Tours.

I felt a sensation of relief when we quitted this scene of desolation and beheld the small village of Gavarnie, with its cold slate roofs, sheltering itself in its quiet nook. It is approached by a handsome marble bridge; and on alighting at the uncouth hostelry, we were amused and overpowered by the number of donkeys and horses, with their guides, generally women, that were clustered before the door, saddled and bridled, and impatient to transport the lazy tourist to the cascade and glacier. The view of the Cirque from the church is truly sublime. An impregnable mountain of rock stands as an everlasting rampart between France and Spain, its sombre aspect rendered still more dreary by numerous patches of eternal snow, with a stupendous waterfall tumbling down a foaming pathway, as if a messenger from some undiscovered land beyond. I visited the church, which claims to date from the Templars, and was received by the solitary curé. The old portal at the entrance belongs to their time, and has their escutcheon and cipher over it. In the church are exhibited, in ghastly preservation, twelve skulls that are said to be those of the last Templars of the valley. They are kept in a wooden case, in two rows, one above the other, and a board on the roadside, with questionable taste, invites the traveller to come and gaze at them. They are supposed to have belonged to the house of their order at

Auch; who, escaping from the Saracens, took refuge in the chapel at Gavarnie, were overtaken and beheaded. This story, however, may be regarded rather as legendary than historic, especially as there are many who doubt that the Templars had ever penetrated into this remote valley. There is a curious statue of our Lady in a side chapel, which, in defiance of historical scepticism, is said to have been brought by the Templars from the Holy Land. The infant has the face of an elderly man.

Leaving this interesting mountain chapel, we reached the celebrated Cirque of Gavarnie in about an hour. It is a stupendous and wonderful scene, filling the soul with awe and admiration. The spirit becomes stupified in gazing upon a solidity that defies fire and flood and man and time. I could only collect my thoughts, as a mantle, around me, and, sitting upon a stone close to the glacier, humble myself in mute adoration and terror at the great catastrophe which had been the architect of this marvellous magnificence. With the royal psalmist, I cried out:—'I have remembered the days of old, I have thought upon all thy works: I have mused upon the works of thy hands. I have stretched forth my hands unto thee; my soul gaspeth unto thee, as a land where no water is.' The precipices which form the sides of the Cirque, varying in height from 1,000 to 1,400 feet, are divided into four steps or stages, upon each of which a glacier, covered with virgin snow, reposes. Down the vertical face of the rocks stream twelve or fifteen small cascades, like tiny white threads; but there is one on the left hand which falls almost perpendicularly from a height of 1,200 feet. It is reported to be the highest waterfall in Europe, and is the head-water or source of the Gave-de-Pau, that favoured stream, which flows by Lourdes and bathes the banks of Bétharram.

On our return from Gavarnie, I parted company with my fellow-travellers at Gédre, leaving in their charge my daughter, and proceeded upon that which is the more peculiar subject of this sketch—my pilgrimage to Our

Lady of HÉAS.* It was five o'clock in the evening, and the sun had lost its noontide intensity, when I bestrode an ungainly donkey, handed my pilgrim staff to an intelligent guide, Grégoire Paget, and began the rugged ascent to the Val de Héas. At first, the scenery was soft and varied; cultivated hill-sides, with numerous farmhouses, looking pleasant in the evening light, and golden crops of corn falling beneath the reaper's eager sickle. But soon it became wild and desolate and rocky, not unlike that of the 'Chaos' through which I had passed in the morning.

The road, or rather pathway, for it is not passable by carriages, is narrow, unequal, and rugged. There is a succession of ascents and descents, lying frequently close to the verge of a deep gorge, where the slightest false step or slip of the earth must send the traveller into the gulf below. There is one passage especially dangerous, which is called in patois *La bat de Souarrou.* At the season when the snow melts, or after a severe storm, this passage becomes very perilous; but they boast in the country that an accident has never occurred there. On the left of the stream rises a wild mountain, presenting little verdure, nourishing a few stunted shrubs, nut trees, beech, and firs, that find root among the ungenial rocks and unproductive stones. Above all this there exists a beautiful plateau, covered with luxuriant fields and supporting a considerable population of shepherds. This mountain and plateau constitute the Coumélie, a secondary chain connected with that of Marboré. About half-way between Gédre and Héas, on the right, is the gorge of Estaubé, through which is the usual passage into Spain. But the imposing spectacle presented in the distance by the chain of Troumouse, its steep summits covered with never-melting snow, is that which most rivets attention. Moreover, it is under the shadow of this range that the modest sanctuary of Héas stands.

In this district the valleys and their rocks abound in rare

* *He*, in the patois of the country, means *hay*, the neighbourhood of Héas being famous for its excellent pasturage.

wild flowers; lovely parterres of all varieties of saxifrages grow in the stony fissures, and hang about them like clusters of grapes. Here, too, is the natal place of the plant which has been named after the great traveller Ramond, in recollection of his numerous scientific expeditions in the Pyrenees. Here, too, are to be found many of those rare flowers made known to florists by the patriotic and indefatigable botanist of Gédre, M. Henri Bordère. Besides the Pyrenean lily, the belladonna abounds upon this road, its livid colour indicating its poisonous qualities, which are not unlike those of opium. To see and enjoy the flora of the Val de Héas in perfection, it should be visited before the month of August; then the air is redolent of perfume, and the eye is dazzled by a thousand rainbow colours; but the heat of the sun generally blights and withers up their bright leaves before the end of July —the ephemeral life of an exquisite toilette in a Parisian ball-room!

We soon arrived at a part of our journey called *L'Araillé*, which in the confusion of disjointed nature resembles the Chaos near Gavarnie. To my eye it was even more imposing than the latter, because, at the opposite side, one sees the widowed relict of the mountain, which has flung away and dashed into giant pieces what once was its 'better half.' This occurred in 1650, when the mountain rolled itself suddenly away, crossed the river at a bound, and scattered itself about in a disorder so complete and terrific that human imagination can scarcely realise the effect. There is an authentic Act in the possession of M. Lacrampo, notary of Luz, which gives an official account of this great cataclysm, and runs as follows:— 'In the year 1650, in the month of May, an immense rock fell from the mountain of Pouybocou, on the borders of Héas, and filled up the bed of the river as far as Mailhenc, the course of which being thus dammed, it was compelled to flow back upon the oratory of the Virgin, near which a large lake was formed, utterly destroying the cabins and farms of the aforesaid Mailhenc, and covering

their summits with the water. It would have been impossible ever after to have erected any building if God had not taken pity upon them. As no person was injured, it was generally considered that the disaster must have been caused miraculously.' *

This enormous block spreads its mighty fragments about in that chaotic confusion which I have described above, and which has given to the spot the name of *L'Araillé*. This word, in the patois of the country, signifies a mass of stones, or a conglomeration of some such description. The lake has disappeared within the last few years, whether by the continued filling-up of gravel from the hills, or by the gradual absorption of the water through crevices worked by itself, is not clearly ascertained. Its bed begins again to assume its former verdure, and is already well covered with herbage.

The effects of this terrible disaster were felt equally by the good and the bad, but the people of the country regarded it as a manifest punishment from Heaven for the sacrilegious conduct of certain covetous persons who had gone about to collect money for the chapel of our Lady, but had impiously applied the amount to their own use. In confirmation of this belief, it is said that the only family that did not suffer was one remarkable for its piety, and that an infant belonging to it having been carried down by the flood in its cradle, was safely deposited uninjured upon the bank. ('Un petit enfant,' au berceau encore, surnagea toute la nuit sur les flots, et fut déposé sur les bords du lac, où on put le recueillir le lendemain. Vous n'êtes donc pas seulement puissante, ô Marie! vous êtes miséricordieuse.') The Abbé Souver-

* 'En l'année 1650, et au mois de mai, tomba un grand rocher en l'endroit des bordes de Mailhenc, de Héas, descendant de Pouybocou, qui remplit tout le lit de l'eau de la rivière de Héas, depuis le pont des Noclats jusqu'aux dites bordes de Mailhenc; qui fut cause que ladite rivière, n'ayant point de cours, refoula jusqu'à l'oratoire ou maison de la Vierge; où se fit un grand lac, au moyen duquel les bordes, cabanes et terres dudit Mailhenc demeurèrent ruinées, étant le tout couvert d'eau jusqu'au sommet desdites bordes et cabanes, étant impossible de jamais y faire aucun bâtiment si Dieu n'y pourvoit; d'où il est inféré que cela est arrivé miraculeusement, personne n'en ayant tiré de dommage.'—*Val et Chapelle de Notre-Dame de Héas*, p. 60.

bielle, Curé of Gédre in 1650, has left a register, in which he states that this '*éboulement*' took place after three days of an extraordinary fall of rain, the 15th, 16th, and 17th of May. Ramond, the celebrated explorer of the Pyrenees, thinks that it was produced by volcanic action, but the more common opinion is that it was the result of an earthquake succeeding heavy rains.

Nearly at the opposite side, a refreshing contrast to this rude picture is presented by the small wood of beech trees on the Estaubé. This spot is remarkable for a number of small cascades; which have caused it to be designated *Les Glouriettes*. The scenery here is soft and pastoral, and forms an interesting excursion for the tourist or sportsman who may have established his head-quarters at Héas. In this sweet valley occurred the death of a French soldier, who had fired sacrilegiously upon the statue of our Lady of Héas, of which I shall have occasion to speak farther on. Near the top of the road a large rock is passed, which is called *Le Mail*. It was upon this rock, tradition tells us, that the statue of the Virgin rested when returning from Luz to the shrine of its predilection at Héas. Pilgrims turn out of the way to say a prayer at this the first altar on their toilsome journey, and tourists visit it as a monument to the legendary faith of the valley.

Having passed L'Araillé and Le Mail, the chapel of our Lady of Héas, which is 5,075 feet above the level of the sea, suddenly becomes visible in the distance. The shoulder of the mountain hitherto had concealed it, until at last it blessed our longing sight and revealed itself in all its seclusion and dreariness. The chapel is in the form of a Greek cross, surmounted by a dome; close to it is the dilapidated presbytery, and above it and around it are the eternal hills. The shadows of evening were upon it, and I thought I had never looked upon a more lonely or a more meditative scene; not even in the woods of Camaldoli, nor in the grass-grown cloisters of the Cartuja at Burgos. Here, Nature is almost in her primal state;

there are a few cultivated fields, but the great range of the mountains is bare and naked and lifeless, except where an occasional flock of sheep browses, or the lonely isard roams at large. No noise is heard, except the distant tinkling of the sheep-bells or the incessant murmur of the torrents which tumble headlong from Aguiláa and Estaubé, from Touyère and Troumouse. Water, now limpid and tranquil, now foaming and roaring; rocks that cannot be named nor numbered; peaks of inexpressible grandeur; glaciers that have never felt the sun, and snow that hastens to become glaciers; verdant valleys and grassy hills; the great Cirque of Troumouse in front, the humble chapel of our Lady at foot. Picture all these, and you will have the valley of Héas and its sanctuary before you. M. Chausenque thus describes this view:—'The entire top of the valley is now in sight; and there, at the distance of about half a league, towards the ravine of Aguiláa, in the wildest of situations, under naked masses of the most denuded rocks, religion has grouped a few fields, a few huts around the *sacellum* or shrine consecrated to Mary. Farther on, all is dreary, desolate, save that at the extremity a few green slopes announce the savanna of Tremouse, while a wandering ray of sunlight upon its brilliant summit reveals the magnificence and grandeur of the Cirque.'* There is not a leaf of foliage, not even a wild flower, except a rare rhododendron or deadly aconite, as one approaches the chapel. There are a few habitations of shepherds, which have the air of a deserted village. You cross an old, precipitous bridge; your donkey stops at a low, comfortless-looking house, which your guide tells you is the *auberge*—l'Hôtel de la Chapelle. A quiet elderly woman comes to the door, bids you welcome, and ushers you into the small close parlour, where long guns of all fashions stand up in the corner, while the walls are hung with the horns and skulls of the isard and the wolf, and with coats and caps

* *Voyages pédestres dans les Pyrénées*, par M. Chausenque, tom. i. p. 233. (1834.)

of deer skin—all the spoils of the proprietor, who is the most famous hunter in these regions.

Opposite to the inn is the church, and close to it, within the same enclosure, is the house for the priests or fathers; exclusive of these, there is little sign of human habitation near. After two hours of journeying, I was glad to alight from my unpleasant beast, and seeing two priests issuing from the church, I addressed myself to them, and informed them of the object of my visit. One of these was Father Ferrère, Superior of the missioners of Poëylahun, of whom I have already spoken, and to whose activity, intelligence, and zeal I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of again rendering testimony. The chapel of Héas is under the direction of the fathers of Garaison, stationed at Poëylahun; and two of them generally reside there during the summer months, from May to October. Nothing can be more dreary or poverty-stricken than their dwelling, which, however, did not prevent them from offering me hospitality for the night, and pressing me to sojourn with them for some days. I sat long with Father Ferrère in his cell-like room, and he entertained me at considerable length on the history and traditions of Héas, on both of which he exhibited devout interest and enlightened conviction. It refreshes the weary spirit to meet such men in the desert; and at a distance from noisy life commune with them upon the goodness and greatness of God and his love to mankind, exhibited and perpetuated in his favours to his holy Mother, of which they are the witnesses and apostles.

At nine o'clock the church bell rang for night prayers; its sound was very solemn in that star-lit darkness. The only persons present were the two missioners, the clerk, the maidservant of the little inn, and myself; but yet there was the voice of prayer as earnest and fervent as if uttered in the noblest cathedral or to the most crowded congregation. The next morning I assisted at the holy sacrifice at an early hour; there were present only the priest, clerk, and myself. I would have travelled far to have

enjoyed the emotions of that quiet Mass at that distant mountain altar, so consoling in its inspirations to my seared and widowed heart. Well does the gifted but unfortunate De la Mennais observe, in one of his notes to the 'Imitation of Christ':—'Nul repos pour celui qui ne le trouve pas en soi. Le cœur inquiet, qui cherche dehors dans les créatures la paix dont il est privée intérieurement, s'est faite une grande illusion: elle n'est pas là.'* Some idea may be formed of the loneliness of this spot from the incident that is related by a priest, upon the occasion of celebrating Mass in the chapel after long abandonment. He tells us that upon turning round to say the *Dominus vobiscum*, he beheld bears, wolves, and sometimes isards, standing at the door in savage amazement at this intrusion upon their favourite haunt.†

No documents exist which give a satisfactory account of the first construction of the chapel at Héas, nor have we any tradition which throws light upon the motives that may have caused our blessed Lady to exhibit her predilection for this most solitary valley. However, there is no doubt that from an early period it was the object of devout pilgrimage. The only account that is current traces its origin to the family of Estrade, belonging to Esquièze, near Luz, who, holding considerable possessions in the Val de Héas, were obliged to maintain there, during many months of the year, a large number of shepherds and other farm-servants. Besides these, the rich pasture land of Troumouse, of Coumélie, and Montferrant attracted then, as at the present day, a number of persons who sought grazing for their cattle or sheep. Thus a large nomade population found itself debarred from all religious assistance or worship during the long summer season. This excited the compassion of the Abbé Estrade, a member of the family mentioned above; and, animated by a holy zeal at seeing so many good and simple people de-

* Liv. ii. chap. vi.

† 'Le croiriez-vous? Il m'est arrivé plus d'une fois, en retournant au Dominus Vobiscum, de ne voir que des ours, des loups, ou des isards en station à la porte de ma chapelle.'—Lagrèze, *Pèlerinages, etc.*, p. 141.

prived of instruction and attendance at Mass, during so large a portion of the year, he determined to remedy this great evil and build a chapel on his own land. He communicated his intention to his friend, the Abbé de Montblanc, who entered into his views, and they laid their project before the Bishop of Tarbes. He willingly encouraged them in their pious undertaking, and gave them the necessary authority to celebrate Mass and perform all parochial duties. With the assistance of the shepherds, who were rejoiced to become participators in their labour, they rapidly completed their little chapel, and dedicated it to the blessed Virgin. It was simple and unadorned, and covered with thatch, like the cabins in the neighbourhood; but it was not the less dear to the heart of the shepherd, whose hands had had a large share in its construction.

There is a tradition that this chapel was built by three masons, who during the time of their work were supported miraculously by the milk of three goats, which with their kids descended to them daily from the mountains. After some time, becoming desirous of better fare than the milk, they resolved to kill one of the kids and feast themselves upon flesh. But neither the goats nor the kids ever returned; and, as a punishment of their intended gluttony, they were reduced to the verge of starvation. This legend is recorded by M. de Lagrèze, by Mr. Packe in his valuable guide book, and will be found more amply detailed in the well-executed account of Héas written 'par des prêtres du diocèse,' and published at Tarbes.* During the fine season the good priests D'Estrade and Montblanc celebrated Mass regularly on Sundays and holidays, performing all the other ceremonies of the Church to the edification and delight of the shepherds. Their attachment to this chapel soon became ardent; they remembered those days of neglect and indifference when they had no spiritual succour. They left it with regret in the autumn, and returned to it with delight in the spring. Their friends and relations in the plain, excited by their enthu-

* *Val et Chapelle de Notre-Dame de Héas*, p. 50. (1864.)

siasm, were induced to visit the remote chapel. Their curiosity generally became devotion, and in a short time after its construction we find the chapel of our Lady of Héas an object of pilgrimage to the inhabitants of the adjacent valleys.

There was one thing, however, wanting, which their poverty had not yet been able to supply—that was a statue of our Lady. In their neighbourhood, across the Spanish frontier, at a place called Pinède, there existed a statue, held in much veneration, under the name of Our Lady of Pinède, or of the Pine tree. Pinède lies in a valley parallel with that of Héas, and distant about a day's journey on horseback. Its name is derived from the picturesque tradition that the blessed Virgin had formerly shown herself in that place on a pine tree. The top of the tree crowned her head, while its branches and foliage served for her garment and mantle. It is thus described in a Spanish hymn:—

Pues de Bielsa soys atleta,
Y corona de Aragon,
Valganos tu proteccion,
Madre de Dios de Pinete.

Á un pastorcillo os mostrais
Sobre un pino colocada,
Que con veros encumbrada,
Al humilde os inclinais;
Y pues vuestro amor decreta
Tan piadosa aparicion,
Valganos tu proteccion, etc.

Avisó el pastor dichoso,
Y los de Bielsa acudiéron
Al sitio, donde erigiéron
Un santuario prodigioso:
Del pino os labró discreta
Trono la veneracion:
Valganos tu proteccion, etc.

* * * *

The statue which represented this novel apparition was the object of much popular veneration, and attracted large crowds at all the great festivals. This excited the covetousness as well as the jealousy of the shepherds of Héas, who, convinced in their ignorant simplicity that a theft for such a purpose was justifiable, conceived the design of carrying off the statue by fraud or force. With this intention six selected men left their homes, traversed the ravines, woods, and mountains, and after much toil arrived at the dead hour of the night at the chapel of Pinède. The hamlet was buried in sleep; the daring plunderers stole quietly into the chapel, laid hold of the coveted image, and without rest or repose regained the rugged hill-side. They had safely in their possession a treasure which they valued as their life, and in the joy of their success they imagined that their triumph was as certain as if they already had placed it upon the altar at Héas. However, they did not relax their steps, and travelled

Bielsa's athlete, maid divine,
Thou crown of lordly Aragon,
Regard us from thy stately pine,
Mother of God's eternal Son!

Unto a little shepherd-boy
Thy lovely face thou didst incline,
Seated aloft upon thy pine;
Then let us humbly share his joy,
And your dear love for us decree
Protection, grace, and piety!

. . . . . .

The happy shepherd joyful bade
Bielsa's children to the site;
And they, with fervour and delight,
A wondrous chapel quickly made:
Discreetly honouring the pine,
From it they named the sacred shrine.

* * * *

De tu casa te usurparon
Unos, con un fino desvelo;
Pero su imprudente zelo
Prontamente le lloraron:
Burlaste su fé indiscretâ,
Volviendote à ta mansion:
Valganos tu proteccion, etc.

Aun con lengua de cristal
Murmura el caso una fuente,
Que á reprehender su insolente
Delicto nació leal:
Fuente Santa la interpreta
Por eso la devocion.
Valganos tu proteccion, etc. *

most of their journey back before they considered themselves secure, when, overpowered by fatigue and drowsiness, and believing that they were sufficiently distant to fear nothing from pursuit, they lay down to sleep, that they might be enabled to enter Héas with their trophy vigorous and victorious.

In the meantime an old inhabitant of Pinède, described as a man of patriarchal life and a devout client of Mary, was suddenly awakened at that very hour by the sound of a soft voice, which thrilled through his heart, and seemed to say, 'My other children from beyond the mountains have come; they have carried away my image.' The devout old man at once got up, uttering a loud cry, which brought his family about him. He related the vision, and immediately they aroused the neighbourhood and rushed to the chapel, when too truly they found that the image was there no longer. Then arose loud wailings and deep cries for vengeance. The words of the voice had indicated the robbers, and with one accord they resolved upon their instantaneous pursuit. 'Let us perish,' they cried, 'or we will rescue our sacred statue from the hands of these sacrilegious wretches. Quick! bring our halberts and our

* 'Gozos que se dedican á N. Señora de Pineta, veneranda en el termino de Bielsa, y en los últimos confines de Aragon.'

Inflamed with wicked thought and zeal,
A band of strangers robbed thy altar;
But soon they tremble, soon they falter,
And deep compunction, weeping, feel:
Returned unto thy rifled seat,
Thou laugh'st at faith so indiscreet!

Then a clear fountain there uprose,
Their insolence to reprimand
With crystal tongue, throughout the land
Murm'ring reproaches as it goes:
Interpreted in pious prayers,
The *Holy Well* the name it bears!

knives; away to the frontier, and if God permits us to overtake these villains, we swear to be avenged.'

Young and old they set forth in large numbers, and rapidly reached the summit of the mountain. They looked anxiously forward over the French frontier, but could discover no trace of the plunderers, and they were about to give up the pursuit in despair, when they perceived a sudden light shining at a short distance. This revived their hopes, and they pressed forward with renewed ardour, when turning round a huge rock, which had impeded their view, they beheld their enemies stretched upon the ground in profound sleep, and the statue of Pinède resting upon a large stone at their side. Strange result! all feeling of rage seemed instantly to subside within them, as if the sight of their beloved Madonna had expelled all vengeance from their hearts. They gently took her from her resting-place, nor did they delay to bend the knee before her as was their habit, but retired, leaving the plunderers undisturbed in their pleasant dreams. They had suffered much from thirst during their vigorous pursuit, but could not find a drop of water on their path with which to assuage it. In this state of suffering and fatigue, they sat down in sullen resignation, when unexpectedly the trickle of falling water saluted their ears, and they perceived a bubbling fountain

flowing at their side. They drank and were refreshed, and were not slow to recognise and acknowledge the miracle, which their kind Mother, in devotion to whom they had so much toiled, had worked for their relief. This fountain still flows, and may be seen by the traveller who passes Canaü; it is called *La Fuente Santa*, and is that to which allusion is made in the hymn.

Si alguno tratar se nota
La Fuente sin reverencia,
Por divina Providencia,
Subitamente se agota!
Quien en ella error cometa,
Provoca tu indignacion.

It is said that, at various epochs when the inhabitants have been led away by drunkenness or other disorders, this stream has suddenly dried up, and has not flowed again until they had given up and repented of their evil ways. It is unnecessary to recount the joy and triumph with which their return was hailed at Pinède, or to say how much this occurrence increased the veneration of the people towards the statue, once more replaced upon its altar.

We may readily imagine the desolation which took possession of the marauders from Héas, when they awoke and found that their prize had disappeared. It is said that they became sensible of the evil which they had committed, and finding that the statue had vanished during their sleep, they recognised the criminality of their 'pious fraud.' Their dejected countenances revealed to their expecting friends the failure of their raid; but when they heard the recital, they all rejoiced that 'Nuestra Señora' herself had saved them from the completion of an act that partook more of cupidity than of devotion. This story is still current in the traditions of Héas; it was related to me by old people in the valley, as well as by my guide on the journey, with the vivid conviction of a recent transaction. Is there not a perfume of profound piety about these popular traditions? and do not these simple recitals produce in the Catholic heart a desire to believe in their

truth, if it cannot always command complete faith, that brings consolation and refreshment in these evil days of general scepticism and unbelief?

The zeal which inspired the men of Héas to appropriate to themselves the property of others no doubt was ill-regulated and unjustifiable, but it was not unrequited. Their dear patroness loved their simplicity and devotion and resolved to reward them, and tradition tells the manner in which she did so. Some shepherds who were watching their flocks in the pastures of the plateau which lies at the foot of Aguiláa, were one day surprised to see two doves circling in the sky. Having made several rounds in the air, they perched themselves near a fountain, which ever since has been called La fontaine de Notre-Dame—'Our Lady's Well.' It is celebrated for the coolness and limpidness of its waters, which never cease to flow abundantly, even in the hottest seasons when other streams become dry. The shepherds drew near cautiously to the spot where the doves had alighted, and for some time continued to look at and admire them. They were of dazzling whiteness, and while they gazed upon them, they felt their hearts excited by the most tender emotions, resembling a religious ecstasy, which they could not explain. They remained as if spell-bound; they could not turn their eyes away from the doves nor yet approach them, until at length these marvellous birds took flight and disappeared.

On returning to their homes in the evening this apparition naturally formed the topic of their conversation with their families. The next day, accompanied by eight more of their neighbours, they returned to the same spot, and about one o'clock they saw the two doves reappear and descend by the brink of the fountain. More astonished even than before, the shepherds regarded them, motionless and in silence; until in a few minutes they saw them resume their flight and direct it towards the valley of Héas. Their curiosity being excited, they followed them, and never losing sight of them, saw them fly together

until they reached the straw-thatched chapel of Héas, when one of them alighted upon the roof. The other continued its flight alone over the mountains, and was seen that same evening in the valley of Azun, on a little hillock above the village of Arrens. It is on this same hill that now stands the church dedicated to our Lady of Poëylahun.

The shepherds of Aguiláa were convinced that these doves were messengers sent to reveal the wishes of the blessed Virgin as regarded her chapel. The intelligence was soon spread; miracles were reported to have taken place, and pilgrims came from far and near. It is said and believed in the valley that the statue of our Lady, which is still at Héas, was found upon this occasion near the fountain; and that the appearance of the doves indicated the spot where it was discovered. This tradition may be nothing more than a pious legend; it is, however, devoutly preserved in the valley, and recounted with simple faith, by the winter fire-side, from father to son and from mother to daughter. It is believed that the separation of the doves, one resting at Héas while the other sought repose at Poëylahun, was expressive of that amity of spirit which was ever to exist between these sister sanctuaries; which, although divided by snow-covered mountains, have ever been one in love and labour, in their worship of God and their veneration of His blessed Mother. The fathers of Garaison are the pastors of Héas and Poëylahun, workmen in the same heavenly vineyard; in their missionary duties exemplifying the accord and the singleness typified in the flight of the mysterious doves. From the summit of the lofty Pimené, looking towards the north, one sees the crest of Aguiláa, resembling an immense wall; on the left are the *pics* of Gaviso, the glaciers of Vignemale, and the dome of Monné of Cauterets. At the foot of Gaviso reigns Our Lady of Poëylahun, at the foot of Aguiláa stands Our Lady of Héas, sister shrines in the solitude of the hills —abodes of holiness and centres of benediction to the guileless people whom they edify, and to the distant pilgrim whom they console.

It was now found that the original chapel was too small to accommodate the numbers that daily came to pay their devotions to it. About this epoch many miracles are reported to have taken place at it. Although these are still spoken of among the families of the neighbourhood, they have not been considered sufficiently authentic to authorise formal publication. The solicitude of its founders, the Abbés Estrade and Montblanc, had provided for the maintenance of divine worship; and the gifts and offerings of the faithful had contributed ample means for the construction of a new chapel. It was constituted a priory, and the prior had full control over the funds. The second chapel also, in a short time, became inadequate to the requirements of the pilgrims; and, from the sources mentioned, the prior found himself in a position to replace it by another more suitable to their wants, which is that which exists at the present day. Its date is somewhere about 1650.

So great was the veneration in which our Lady of Héas was held at this period, that the people of Barèges, Lavedan, Aure, and Campan were in the habit of offering the first-born of their flocks and herds as a tribute to her honour. In this manner the priory received every year a considerable supply of cattle and sheep: these offerings were known by the designation of *Gadis*. It was observed that those who were regular in the discharge of this tribute prospered throughout the year, while those who neglected it generally met with some misfortune. The following example of this is recorded. The family of Baradère was one of the most respectable in the district, and celebrated for their breed of horses. Their head made a vow to give to the Virgin the best of his four brood mares, provided that they all foaled without an accident. He then consulted the curé as to whether he was bound to select beforehand the animal that he was to give as his offering, and the curé advised him to do so. But this particular mare gave birth to a filly of such beauty that M. Baradère, being unwilling to part with her, resolved to

substitute her full value in money, at the valuation of competent persons. Accordingly he carried the money to the prior, but while in the act of counting it a supernatural neighing was heard at the extremity of the chapel. They went out to see what animal was there, but they could find none about; whereupon Baradère, becoming convinced that this sound was a reproach from the blessed Virgin for the non-fulfilment of his vow, took away his money and in its place sent the animal that he had allotted. The priory of Héas was for many years famous for its breed of horses, whose origin is traced to this incident. Several misfortunes are cited in proof of the visitations that attended broken vows in the valley of Héas, but the foregoing will suffice as an illustration.*

It would seem as if Providence designed that the attempted sacrilege upon our Lady of Pinède was to be avenged by a fitting retribution. When the disaster of Pouybocou occurred, one of its most lamentable effects was to render impracticable the road to the chapel of Héas. Throughout the country the universal cry was, 'Shall we never again be able to visit our divine protectress at Héas?' ('Nous n'irons plus à Héas!') The road had become extremely dangerous, so that the most adventurous pilgrim would have been rash in attempting the journey. This inspired the inhabitants of Luz with the idea of taking possession of the statue and transporting it to a chapel in their own parish. But as the people of Gédre regarded the statue with a veneration not inferior to those of Héas, they feared to be obstructed by them, and therefore made their way through the hidden paths of the mountains, and arriving at the now desolate chapel, removed the statue and placed it upon a carriage which they had prepared for this purpose. However, their toils and labours proved vain, for the statue returned miraculously to Héas and replaced itself upon its chosen altar. It was witnessed upon its passage back through the air by several inhabitants of Gédre, who saw it rest, as if for repose, for

* *Val et Chapelle de Notre-Dame de Héas*, p. 56.

some time on a large rock in *L'Araillé*, which ever since has been called LE MAIL, or the stone of our Lady. Pilgrims to Héas, mounting the steep ascent of *L'Araillé*, prostrate themselves upon their knees before the natural pedestal upon which the Mother of God deigned to repose her miraculous image, and generally carry away with them as a relic a bit of this privileged stone. There is engraved upon it the date 1650, which is that of the catastrophe of Pouybocou and of the return of the statue.

In due course of time the road was again rendered passable, and the pilgrimages that had been discontinued were renewed with redoubled fervour. The prior and his priests returned to their residence, and, as a writer observes, 'The desert which had been for some time abandoned once more re-echoed, as it had done of old, with the harmony of sacred canticles.' It was not until 1788 that the lake poured itself away altogether. It suddenly precipitated itself into the Gave, carrying along with it, in its impetuous course, huts, mills, houses, and rocks, repeating almost the disaster which had occurred at its formation. Since that period its former bed has become a plot of coarse grass, although it still retains the name of lake, and presents an aspect of barrenness befitting the desolation that surrounds it.

Under the careful management of the priors and the protection of our Lady, the sanctuary of Héas continued to attract the devotion of the faithful in undiminished numbers, until the revolutionary tempest, in 1789, burst over its secluded towers. The people of the valley, however, endeavoured to preserve it from desecration; they built up the entrance doors of the chapel, and menaced death to whomsoever should violate the temple of Mary. Some soldiers had been sent from the post of Canaü to do duty at Héas, among whom was a man notorious for his daring and impious character. Looking fiercely at the statue of our Lady, which still stands in the niche over the great entrance, he exclaimed: 'I shall soon see if

you are a saint, as it is said, and are able to protect your own statue,' and discharged his musket at it, striking it with the ball in the forehead. A few days after this act he happened to be placed on an outpost in the valley of Estaubé, at a place called *La Hitte-Hourcadère*, but he had scarcely arrived at his post than he was hit by a bullet in the very same part where he had wounded the statue, and was killed instantaneously. It is related by one of his comrades that he became sad and depressed immediately after he had committed his wicked profanation, and that he continually declared his conviction that he would be struck in the same part in which his bullet struck the statue:—'Je serai frappé à l'endroit même où j'ai frappé la statue.' Most natural presentiment; but, alas! repentance and atonement did not enter into the discipline of the revolutionary army. Until lately a monument existed to mark the spot where his death had occurred. This story is believed implicitly in all that country; the name of the sacrilegious soldier is still remembered, and the horror with which it is mentioned shows how deep is the sentiment that impiety never escapes without chastisement, even in this life.

The prior and other priests were compelled to abandon their solitude, and the chapel and its dependencies were sold to different inhabitants of the valley. Even during those dark days our Lady of Héas did not altogether cease to exercise her influence over the hearts of the people, for silently and secretly many came to seek grace and consolation at her proscribed altar. One of the first effects of revived religion in the Pyrenees, when the Reign of Terror had passed away, was a return to the neglected sanctuary of Héas, but it was not possible for a long time to make arrangements fully to satisfy the anxiety of the faithful. This ultimately was effected by Monseigneur Loyson, bishop of the diocese, who appointed the clergy of Luz to attend at Héas on its great solemnities and perform the ceremonies of religion, as in olden times. Sixteen long years elapsed before the sanctuary regained any portion of

its ancient possessions, and it was not until 1848 that the bishop was enabled to repurchase the chapel, the presbytery, and a few acres of land from M. André Barrio, of Luz, who had become their owner under the republic. The bishop placed the chapel under the direction of the fathers of Garaison, who afford every spiritual assistance and direction to the pilgrims that continually visit it, but most especially on its great festivals of August 15 and September 8.

I had hoped to have been present upon one of these occasions, but not having been able to carry out my intention, I will gratify my readers by a description taken from M. Chausenque's agreeable 'Voyages pédestres dans les Pyrénées,' published 1834. He writes:—'The proper time to select for a visit to Héas is the epoch of the pilgrimage to the chapel of our Lady, which is held in high veneration by all these mountaineers. On August 15 and September 8, pilgrims coming from different places in the vicinity unite in this wild and remote valley, which the Madonna has chosen as her retreat, and from the 13th of the month we daily behold them passing in troops through Barèges, each person carrying his provisions, and loudly chanting hymns and canticles. We started for the same purpose, and during a considerable time formed part of a long file of pilgrims from the vale of Lavedan. Their festal costumes, the crimson *capulets* of the women, their manner of progression, and their boisterous gaiety constituted a picture that rendered still more impressive the dismal severity of the scenery. However, it soon became one sublime harmony, when their rude voices intoned the ancient *cantiques* of the old pilgrims, and other voices in the distance echoed them back in the same wild strain. The hymn is very long, and I will give one stanza as an example of the whole:—

Quand nous fûmes au pont qui tremble,
Hélas! mon Dieu!
Nous ne trouvâmes point d'église
Pour prier Dieu;

Les Huguenots l'avaient détruite
En grande malice ;
C'est en dépit de Jésus-Christ,
Et de la Vierge Marie.

Let no one reject with contempt the simple thoughts and words of this hymn; they bear the stamp of the age in which they were composed, probably by some pilgrim on the road, to while away the tedious journey. We cannot expect to find in them either style, or taste, or refined composition. It is only on their native soil, on the path to Héas or to Compostella, in a valley desolate and impressive as that of L'Échelle, and chanted in a monotonous key by a hundred shrill voices, that one should hear these inspirations of illiterate devotion, and then only could one judge how completely they are in consonance with the scene and the performers. . . .

'After some delay the *cantiques* were again resumed, and all that multitude, which lay scattered in repose on the grass or standing about in groups, was in motion; for a procession appeared, conveying the miraculous image with great pomp. We joined the *cortége*, and were borne *pêle-mêle* into the sacred sanctuary, which we were astonished to find handsomely decorated, with three altars richly gilt, its walls covered with tapestry, and its ceiling of wood tastefully decorated. One priest was scarcely sufficient to satisfy the eagerness of the crowd, which approached the rails to kiss the image. Another priest was engaged in registering the offerings and the money which were given to have Masses said for the 'intentions' of the donors. The price of a Mass at Héas is threefold what it is at other places; but this should not be considered exorbitant when one remembers the desperate weather and the frightful roads that the poor priest has to encounter in the discharge of his mission during the long winter. All around had the appearance of a large fair, so great was the supply of blessed crosses, rings, and beads that had touched the miraculous image, and which were offered for sale. Notwithstanding the crowd, everything was con-

ducted with decency and propriety, and exhibited none of the disorder which sometimes has tarnished Bétharram and other places of pilgrimage.' *

The fathers at present are engaged in repairing the church, which had suffered much during the long years that it was abandoned, but their means are so limited, and the expense and difficulties so great in such a remote district, that any contribution to its restoration becomes an object of much charity and value. The church or chapel presents an imposing perspective. It is built in the form of a Greek cross, crowned by a double dome, and surmounted by an octagon tower. In this tower there is a small bell, which bears the date of 1645, and is supposed to have belonged to the second chapel. At the entrance to the church there is a flight of six massive stone steps, and above the portal, in a niche, is a stone statue of the Virgin, the same statue that was struck by the soldier whose history I have narrated. The appearance of the church when one first enters it is light and cheerful; the length and breadth are equal, being about fifty-four feet. The altar is plain and modern, but the old reredos is in good preservation and richly gilt. The ancient statue of our Lady of Héas is placed upon a pedestal above the tabernacle. It is covered by a mantle upheld by angels, while the heads of cherubim and seraphim, expressing joy and confidence, are grouped around it. The side columns are twisted, richly ornamented, and crowned by gorgeous Corinthian capitals. The choir is lighted by two round-arched windows, eastward and westward, while the altar faces the south. The floor of the sanctuary is elevated about a foot and a half above that of the church, and three high steps lead to the communion rails. The ceiling is in wood, and is painted to represent bricks, which produces an unpleasing effect. There existed formerly on the walls of the sanctuary frescoes representing houses, trees, and fantastic animals. These were in part destroyed by time and damp, but are now being

* Chausenque, *Voyages pédestres dans les Pyrénées*, tom. i. pp. 230, 237.

replaced by designs of a more appropriate character. There is a very ancient crucifix with a life-sized figure of our Saviour in the middle of the nave, which inspires much devotion. The interior of the church does not altogether correspond with the promise of the exterior, and is deficient in size, not being large enough to accommodate the pilgrims that visit it upon great festivals. On ordinary occasions it is amply sufficient for the few shepherds and farmers who frequent it during the summer. 'Strangers who pass the season at Barèges, St. Sauveur, or Cauterets generally visit Héas, especially on the two great festivals of our Lady, when they come to witness the solemnities at her sanctuary in the snows. Whatever may be the motive which induces them to make this pilgrimage, whether mere curiosity or pure piety, there are few who leave it unmoved by the grace of God or unaffected by love for his ever-blessed Mother. Upon these solemn occasions the chapel of Héas presents a most impressive spectacle. All difference of rank and condition seems effaced; the gorgeous toilettes of silk and satin are mingled with the coarse peasant garment. All degrees are confounded, and become, as it were, packed together in the choir and the nave: old age and youth and infancy; the mother with her new-born babe; the wife, the widow, and the maiden; our neighbours from over the hills, who long since have forgiven, if they have not forgotten, the surprise of Pinède; the Spaniard in his picturesque costume, sometimes brilliant, but more often soiled and tattered; all, as members of the same family, surround their Mother, solicit for her intercession, and, kissing with love and respect the feet of the image, pledge their fidelity to the holy Virgin and her divine Son. The confessionals are besieged throughout the night, and at early dawn all kneel at the same sacred table and together partake of the bread of angels—"*panis angelorum.*"

'Nothing can be more imposing than the spectacle of this crowd as it moves in procession round the chapel, and chants with loud voice the simple but touching Litany of

Loretto. A thousand vigorous voices pour themselves forth in responses of every variety of intonation—a commingling of new and old harmonies which frequently melt into precious tears, that sweeten and intensify their prayer. On re-entering the church, this compact mass of worshippers welded together seems animated by the same profound religious sentiment. The sighs of devotion, contrite and loving, resound throughout the chapel, and when the preacher ascends the pulpit the effect of his discourse seems already anticipated in the fervour and tenderness with which they listen. Most beautiful and touching, to employ an expression which is dear to the lips of these mountaineers, is this "adoration" of the blessed Virgin. They perfectly understand the meaning of this word and act: and although they may not be able to define it, they know that they use the word in its etymological sense and not according to its strict theological signification. They understand fully that adoration is due to God alone. 'Adoration' as applied to the Virgin, in their patois, being simply a term of respect, which signifies kissing devoutly her image, *ados—adora.**

'The character of the surrounding scenery gives to the pilgrimage of Héas a peculiarity which cannot be found in other sanctuaries. A lonely chapel at the foot of the highest mountains in the Pyrenees; torrents which precipitate themselves with a roar of thunder from the summits of Aguiláa and Tremouse; eternal snows bounding the blue horizon; weary pilgrims ascending and descending perpendicular pathways; at one moment an immense multitude thronging the sanctuary and making the hills vocal with the buzz of prayer, at another, a little later, the

* 'Ils comprennent fort bien que la véritable adoration n'est due qu'à Dieu. Adorer la Vierge, c'est dans leur patois un terme respectueux qui signifie, au propre, baiser d evotement son image: *ados—adora.*' I have given the foregoing explanation with satisfaction, as it serves once for all, at least in these pages, to determine the sense of a term which when applied to the blessed Virgin is generally misunderstood by Protestants and non-Catholics. But there is no mistake or misapprehension in the most unenlightened Catholic mind, whether it be among the shepherds of the Pyrenees or the herdsmen of Connemara.

silence and the solitude of the desert.'* The foregoing extracts show that the devotion to our Lady of Héas has not diminished since the period of the visit described by M. Chausenque; and that the lapse of thirty eventful years has tended to increase its popularity and extend its celebrity.

I have seldom seen a more intense blaze of starlight than shone over the lonely chapel upon that sultry August night. The vast empyrean was spangled with countless luminous orbs; the canopy of heaven seemed to repose itself upon the peaks of the stupendous Cirque. I was alone in the contemplation of this majestic grandeur, and when the evening bell tolled out its summons to prayer it seemed to me a charmed spot where an aged man might love to wear out his span of life, and weep and pray, like anchorite of old, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' The next morning I was compelled by other duties to bid the good fathers an unwilling farewell, and I retraced my steps at an early hour to Gédre, by the same precipitous path and wild scenery that I have described in ascending.

At Gédre I sought out an humble inhabitant, whose taste and talents have achieved an European name for himself and for his native village, M. Henri Bordère, 'le maître d'école;' but very different in his attributes and character from that other worthy, who has made the *sobriquet* familiar to the readers of 'Les Mystères de Paris.' I found M. Bordère busied in teaching a small class of pupils, the greater number of those that usually attend his school being engaged at harvest work for their parents. He is almost fifty years of age, strongly built and tall, portly and yet graceful, with a massive head and open cordial countenance. He received me warmly and with the ease of a gentleman; and when I informed him respecting my own pursuits and told him that I, a pilgrim from beyond the seas, had stopped to pay the humble tribute of my respect to native genius, he received the

* *Val et Chapelle de Notre-Dame de Héas*, pp. 89-92. (1864.)

compliment with boyish modesty. In reply, he placed before me for inspection his most curious collection of Pyrenean flowers, arranged in albums of various size. Some of the wild flowers of Héas he has called after his own name, *Bordereana.* Among others there was one most beautiful specimen, a blue flower with a rough leaf like that of the vine, which he has discovered only last June (1868), and which he has named after the famous Pyrenean traveller and florist *Ramondia Pyrenaica.*

His talents have been fully appreciated by the authorities, who offered him the directorship of the Museum at Bagnères-de-Bigorre. This would have been to him a position of some pecuniary consideration, and would have afforded him ample leisure for his favourite pursuits; but he refused that and similar offers, saying that he loved his native rocks and flowers too well to leave them, and that he preferred to pursue his simple tastes among them rather than seek for wider renown in 'crowded cities or the haunts of men.' This love of flowers had developed itself in him at an early period; and he began to collect, preserve, and arrange long before he became aware that he was making for himself and his native valley a brilliant name in the natural history of his country. He has quite a gallery of photographs given to him by distinguished strangers who have visited him. Many of them were English: among others was that of John Stuart Mill. At parting, this modest but patriotic naturalist gave me his card, which I transcribe for the benefit of such of my readers as may happen to pass his door. 'BORDÈRE, Instituteur, Membre correspondant de la Société botanique de France. À Gédre (route de Gavarnie).'

Good-bye, flowery Gédre! good-bye, holy Héas! and thou, O blessed Lady, ever be to me, and to those who have accompanied me in my narrative, a guide and mother: 'MONSTRA TE ESSE MATREM.'

CANTIQUE À NOTRE-DAME DE HÉAS.

Refrain.

Tous à Héas montons,
Tous à Héas chantons :
Marie est notre auguste Reine !
Oui, nous le proclamons
Jusqu'au haut de ces monts :
Du monde elle est la Souveraine.
Et, quand nous descendrons,
Que l'écho des vallons
Le porte au plus loin dans la plaine !
Cent fois nous redirons,
Toujours nous chanterons :
Marie est Vierge et Mère et Reine.

I.

Marie appelle les pécheurs
Dans son humble et sainte chapelle ;
Elle veut embraser leurs cœurs
D'amour pour Jésus et pour elle. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

II.

'Ah ! pleurez, mes pauvres enfants,'
Nous dit aujourd'hui notre Mère ;
'Soyez purs, plus tard triomphants,
Au nom de mon Fils, votre Frère. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

III.

'Jésus, bien des fois, contre vous,
Sous mes yeux, brandissait ses armes ;
J'ai toujours calmé son courroux,
Mais il demande enfin vos larmes. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

IV.

'Tombez aux pieds de mon autel ;
Oui, dans les pleurs lavez vos crimes,
Le Dieu juste, au cœur paternel,
Veut des regrets, non des victimes. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

HYMN TO OUR LADY OF HÉAS.

Chorus.

Let us all to Héas climb,
Our voices all for Héas chime!
Unto the mighty hills proclaim
That Mary is our Queen
And the world's fair Sovereign!
We'll spread afar her noble name,
And when our steps we've ta'en
Downward to the distant plain,
A hundred echoes her sweet fame
Shall speak, in melting strain;
And ever shall we sing from morn till e'en
Of MARY, mother, maid, and Queen!

I.

The sinner she invites
Unto her chapel bless'd and lowly;
With love his heart excites
Towards Her and Jesus holy.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

II.

'Ah! weep, my children pure,'
Our Mother says to us to-day;
'Be virtuous and endure—
My Son to triumph leads the way.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

III.

'How often Jesus raised
His brandished arms to strike the blow,
Till my loved smile appeased,
And caused your burning tears to flow.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

IV.

'Before my altar bending,
Your guilt in tears repentant lave;
Justice and love contending,
God's heart paternal seeks to save.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

V.

. . nez! Dans ces arides lieux,
Pour vous j'ai des grâces nouvelles:
Vos soupirs seront plus pieux,
Vos promesses plus solennelles. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

VI.

'Ah! recevez tous le pardon,
Mais, n'oubliez pas votre Mère,
De Jésus craignez l'abandon,
Fuyez l'éternelle colère.' (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

VII.

Et quels seraient donc les ingrats,
Marie, à votre voix rebelles!
Reprenez-nous tous dans vos bras,
Nous ne serons plus infidèles. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas, etc.

VIII.

La solitude et les déserts
Vont mieux à l'âme pénitente.
Biens, plaisirs, bruits de l'univers,
Adieu! je dresse ici ma tente. (*Bis.*)
Tous à Héas montons,
Tous à Héas chantons.

V.

'Come to this arid place,
Your contrite sighs will be more deep;
I'll aid, by some fresh grace,
Your solemn promises to keep.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

VI.

'Pardon you all receive,
But ne'er forget your Mother's love;
In Jesus' mercy believe,
And shun what may His anger move.'
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

VII.

Then, Mary, mother mine,
None to thy voice will rebel be:
Thine arms around us twine,
That all may love thee faithfully.
Let us all to Héas climb, &c.

VIII.

These desert solitudes
Suit well the soul that's penitent.
Pleasures and worldly goods,
Adieu! for here I fix my tent!
Then let us all to Héas climb,
Our voices all for Héas chime!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF BOURISP.

OUR LADY OF BOURISP.

(Val d'Aure.)

O Bourisp, bourgade bénie,
Tressaille sous tes pics aigus,
Toi, que la Mère de Jésus
Pour son sanctuaire a choisie!

C'est à toi que sa sainte image
Fut donnée en signe d'amour:
Oh! qu'il fut beau pour toi, le jour
Où tu reçus ce divin gage.

Cantiques.

Bagnères-de-Luchon is a most charming spot; it is said to be the Baden-Baden of the Pyrenees. And, in truth, if loveliness of scenery, mountain, plain, and forest; if fashion of company and extravagance of dress; if crowded hotels, extortionate lodging-houses, and expensive *châlets* constitute a resemblance, Luchon is not unworthy of the comparison. There is one point, however, in which Luchon yields to Baden—there is neither gambling-table nor casino; and the devil has to seek other means for the squandering of fortunes and the destruction of souls. Few places present a more picturesque and animated appearance than Luchon in the season. The picture, when one looks down upon it from any of the surrounding hills, is exquisite, its clean graceful houses peering through the groves of poplars, and its public buildings and avenues offering a pleasing spectacle of comfort and luxury. The plain in which it is situated is diversified by stately trees, rich fields of *maïs*, and a noisy river, enclosed and surrounded by alleys of plantains, poplars, and lime trees. The Allée d'Étigny, with its gay-coloured shops, its

embowered *cafés*, its snug *salons de lecture*—ringing from earliest morning to the cracking of whips, the jingling of bells, the galloping of horses, the rattling of carriages, the shouting of guides—is a scene full of variety and distraction. And when you grow giddy with the bustle, you raise your eyes to the glorious *pics* that close the southern horizon, and in their unchanging grandeur forget the frivolous pleasure-seekers on the plain. I do not know a more attractive lounge than the Allée d'Étigny at Luchon.

There are endless excursions in the neighbourhood for the healthy and vigorous. There is the pleasant Val de Lis, with its superb Cascade d'Enfer tumbling from that tremendous chasm called Le Gouffre d'Enfer, or Hell's Gulf. It is remarkable how, in these mountain fastnesses, men love to dedicate to the infernal deity so much of the grand and sublime. This seething gulf, at the contemplation of which I have seen strong heads grow giddy, is well calculated to convey the idea of unfathomable darkness and eternal confusion. The valley abounds with the lily, which grows to an extraordinary height, and from its luxuriance has given its name to the Val de Lis. Then, again, there is the delicious Lac d'Oo, with its bright blue waters and its multitudinous cascades, the harmonious outline of its softly-tinted mountains, and its wide-spread plains. But above all is the stupendous Port de Venasque.

The drive to the Hospice, at which the ascent to the Port de Venasque commences, is through a splendid beech forest, with frequent glimpses of retired valleys and purling streams. The ascent, although very steep and perilous, can be made on horseback as well as on foot. The higher portion of this ascent is extremely precipitous, and may well try the nerves of the lowlander. The path lies constantly over the ledges of the rock, on which the horse places his hoof with an ease and safety that is quite astonishing, and the rider's best security is to hang the reins upon the neck and leave the trusty animal to its own guidance. The danger of this pass is so well recognised that

there is a local proverb which says, 'A father will not look back at his son, nor a son wait for his father,' while ascending. The steepness of the mountain and the acuteness of the zigzags constantly increase until one approaches the summit, when the angle of the slope becomes so highly inclined that the path turns abruptly at each four or five feet. The ground being covered with loose shale, there actually is no secure hold for the horse's foot, and if the animal before you happens to slip and you are compelled to draw up, you soon become unpleasantly alive to the peril of your position. Yet it is said that an accident has never occurred upon this ascent, which is made by thousands of tourists and travellers during the season, so sure are the horses and so careful are the guides. There is a spot, the name and history of which might seem to convey a contradiction to this assertion—it is called *Le trou des Chaudronniers*, several tinkers having perished there during a snow-storm.

But the danger of the ascent is soon forgotten in the magnificence of the scenery to which it conducts. After a breathless scramble of several minutes, we arrived at a gap in the mountain, on which our eyes had been long anxiously fixed, and we found ourselves unexpectedly in presence of the mighty MALADETTA; beneath us was a vast and verdant valley of Aragon, the extensive view to the west being bounded by the blue mountains of sunny Spain. We were then standing at 7,930 feet above the level of the sea. A thick vapour had accompanied us during a portion of our way, but as we gained the summit it considerately cleared off, and revealed to us a spectacle of the utmost sublimity. I never can forget the impression made upon me by the first appearance of the Maladetta. 'A livid, ghastly mass of granite and glaciers,' it forms a dazzling semicircle of about six miles long. It was patched with small heaps of snow, and studded with frostbitten pines, which had been broken by the avalanche, scorched by lightning, or uprooted by the wind. To me it had almost the semblance of life; it seemed the livid

countenance of a stricken old man, with his hoary locks matted on his bared brow, and the passion of some desperate deed frozen into his hideous lineaments. Shepherds believe that this now barren mountain once was fine pasture land and covered with flocks, but that our Saviour on some occasion happening to traverse it, He was stoned by the natives, upon which everything—mountain, sheep, shepherds, and dogs—was instantaneously frozen up, to remain in that state until 'the crack of doom;' and thus the mountain earned its ill-omened name—MALADETTA!

No one who loves the grandeur of mountain scenery and its inspirations should fail to ascend the Entécade. The same road, shaded by wide-spreading beech, which leads to the Port de Venasque conducts, as far as the Hospice, to that of the Entécade. The ascent, although much less difficult, is scarcely less picturesque. As we approached the summit all track of any path disappeared, and the way lay over a wild grassy hill, on which large herds of Spanish cattle, all fawn-coloured, were quietly grazing, each animal having a large bell attached to its neck. The view does not completely develope itself until one stands on the *crête* of the mountain, and then the eye embraces a spectacle that is not to be surpassed. Underneath lies the fertile and teeming valley of Aran, with its fourteen villages glittering in the southern sun, some reposing by the river's brink, some perched upon the slopes of the hills, and all presenting the effect of a richly-coloured panorama—and this is life and toil. On the other side rise the lofty peaks of Maladetta and Nethou, the Pic de Pique, and far away through the clouds the Pic du Midi (de Bigorre); there is an interminable chain of snow-clad summits that vie with each other in sublimity, and seem to enthral the eye and mind by their unutterable magnificence. Beneath our feet in this direction are a pine forest and grassy valley, through which the young Garonne ripples its infant waters—and this is solitude and repose. No words can describe the impression produced by this

wondrous scene; the pencil can but faintly convey it. Except the view from the Righi, and perhaps that from Vesuvius at sunrise, it has not been my lot to gaze upon any spot of earth that more entirely ravished my heart, and satisfied its cravings after the sublime and beautiful, than this prospect from the ENTÉCADE.

These are but a few among the most remarkable of the excursions which render a sojourn at Bagnères-de-Luchon so agreeable. Nor is Luchon without its oratory sacred to our Lady; and while the guide books and antiquaries connect its name and traditions with the pagan divinities it has not been unmindful of the veneration paid so widely throughout these districts to the blessed Virgin. At a short distance from the town, on the road to the Val de Lis, there is a wayside oratory called *La Chapelle de Ragnostique*, consecrated to our Lady and much revered by the inhabitants. An ancient chapel formerly stood upon the same spot, but was destroyed during the Revolution. The field adjoining became the property of an inhabitant of Luchon, who, contrary to the advice of many, built a stable upon the very spot where the chapel had stood. His cattle shortly became diseased and pined away; nothing seemed to thrive with him, until at last, yielding to the persuasion of his friends, he took down the stable and made a vow to erect an oratory instead. He proceeded to dig out the foundation, and before doing so, piously knelt on the sod to pray, when, to his astonishment, the cattle that were grazing near came and knelt down also by his side. From that time forward he was no more affected by disease or loss, and the world prospered with him. While clearing for the foundation they discovered a skeleton, with the teeth perfect and the hair still attached to the skull; this was supposed to be the remains of a hermit who was much renowned for his sanctity in former days. No Catholic traveller to Spain or to the mountain passes the chapel without stopping to pray, and even the poorest deposits a *sou* in the box appended to the grating.

There is an excursion that had more attraction for me than those of the Entécade or the Port de Venasque—a pilgrimage to the chapel of Our Lady of Bourisp in the Val d'Aure. I left Luchon at six o'clock, on a bright morning that had succeeded a day of tempestuous rain, by the *calèche* which plies daily during the summer to Bagnères-de-Bigorre. We passed the ancient and most interesting church of St. Aventin, and that scarcely less remarkable church at Castillon with its quaint frescoes; and traversing the Col de Peyreharde by a corkscrew road of admirable engineering, and overlooking the populous valley of Louron and its multitudinous villages, silvery with the sunlight streaming upon their slated roofs, we arrived at the pretty, busy town of Arreau. At the opposite entrance to the town, descending from the Col d'Aspin, on the verge of the highway between the hill and the river, there is a small chapel with the inscription, 'Notre-Dame de Bon Rencontre, priez pour les voyageurs' ('Our Lady of Happy Meeting, pray for travellers').

There is a very interesting church at Arreau, that of St. Exupère, which repays a visit. It was constructed in the eleventh century, and has been recently restored. The *portail* is very ancient; the escutcheon and monogram of the Templars are carved above it, and some very curious sculpture in stone ornaments the frieze. One represents a woman wearing the cap still common in the mountains; she is laden with a bag of her sins, and half swallowed up by some monster, while two serpents seize upon her and seem making an effort to bear her away. St. Exupère was born at Arreau in the fifth century, and after the death of St. Servius was elected Bishop of Toulouse. He was instrumental in delivering Toulouse from the Vandals and repressing the heresy of Vigilantius. He checked simony, which unhappily at that period prevailed to a great extent among the clergy, and was cited as one of the greatest prelates of his age by St. Jerome, who writes of him as follows:—'He endured hunger himself that he might be able to feed his poor brethren; he underwent

many voluntary privations that he might relieve the necessities of others. But in his poverty he was truly rich. How great that was may be understood when it is known that the only vessels he had, in which to keep the sacred elements, were an ozier basket and an earthen cup.' His charity was extended specially to pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre and to the anchorites of Egypt. He died at Blagnac about 417, and his relics were transferred to Toulouse, where a handsome church has been dedicated to his honour.

I quitted the *diligence* at Arreau, and proceeded on foot on my pilgrimage through the beautiful Val d'Aure. It is one of the most fertile and pleasant of the Pyrenean valleys; it is thickly populated, and from Arreau to St. Lary, a distance of about nine miles, there is not a foot of unproductive land. There are not less than twenty-five villages in this circumference, some grouped on the borders of the river Nestes, some hung on the declivities and heights of the mountains at either side. The extremity of the valley is bounded by the lofty peaks of Azet and Tramesaygues, which enclose the plateau of Vieille-Aure and present a most picturesque aspect.

In no part of the Pyrenees is the devotion to our Lady more extensive or more deep-rooted than in the Val d'Aure. At half an hour's walk from Arreau is situated Cadéac, which possesses mineral springs that are frequented by the infirm of the district. It stands picturesquely on a rock over the Nestes, is approached by a quaint old bridge, and occupies a position of some strength and singularity. Above it are the remains of an old tower which sheltered the garrison that protected Cadéac from the Saracens, who overran that country in the eleventh century. The entrance to the town at the southern side is an aperture cut through a rock near this tower, and looks like a mediæval gateway. It is, however, a chapel to our Lady, known as *La Chapelle de Pène Taillade*, dedicated to our Lady of Mercy. On one side is a flight of steps, disposed like an amphitheatre, opposite the altar, as if for

the accommodation of persons attending Mass, and at the other side is an arch over a grating, through which the altar may be seen. In the sanctuary there is a painting which represents the Virgin on her death-bed, attended by the apostles, while angels are preparing to bear her up to heaven. Under this is the inscription—'O Mater Dei, memento mei.' Outside the town, not far from the chapel of Pène Taillade, there are the remains of a large monastery, now in part inhabited by a farmer, in part crumbling to ruins.

At St. Lary, which is a corruption for St. Hilary, is the beautiful church of Ste. Marie, now undergoing repair. It was formerly the baptistery of the valley, to which it was customary for all mothers to send their new-born infants to be baptized, and enrolled as 'enfants de Marie.' At Tracherie, from which there is a fine view of the basin of the Nestes, there is a small oratory, and in the abrupt and savage gorge which terminates the valley, where the road to Spain winds through rugged rocks and under precipitous *pics*, there is a small chapel called Muy Abat.* It stands on the brink of the torrent, like a halcyon defying the storm, and gives shelter to many a weather-beaten traveller. The inhabitants of Tramesaygues, Eget, Aragnouet, and other more distant places, frequent this shrine on certain festivals, and offer a picturesque and touching spectacle when seen at their devotions in that rude sanctuary. There was another oratory, at the farther extremity of the gorge, which presented much interest, but which is now abandoned. It was supposed to have been served by the Templars. A bridge, composed of a few decayed fir trees stretched across the chasm, led the traveller to a small house that seemed to tremble over the precipice, and from the side of which rose an humble spire. Here, in the centre of avalanches, surrounded by abysses, and exposed to dangers of all sorts, the old Templars watched and prayed, ready to receive and succour the belated wayfarer. The remains of a chapel,

* This word signifies, in patois, in the middle of the mountains.

separated from the house by a small vestibule, still retains the name of hospital; and here are buried the bodies of any unfortunate travellers who may happen to meet their death on the road, as if the exercise of its ancient hospitality was transferred to the grave.

This chapel, which is in the Romanesque style, still preserves on the door the monogram of our Saviour, which is generally found upon all the churches in the valley—X P I Σ T—with the A and O, which recall his own words:—'I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.' The monogram of Mary is always to be seen at the side of that of her divine Son. The X, as the initial of the name of Christ, may be observed upon most of the tombs previous to the fourteenth century preserved in these valleys. At Sarrancolin, in the lower valley, there was an oratory dedicated to our Lady, under the designation of Notre-Dame des Plantats; it was remarkable for its sculpture, but was totally destroyed at the Revolution.

At the extremity of this beautiful valley, as much distinguished for the frank and cordial character as for the piety of its inhabitants, there formerly stood an humble hamlet, which consisted of seven small houses. In the centre of these houses there was a lowly church, of which nothing now remains beyond the tradition. This village was BOURISP, and the church was dedicated to St. Orens. It was here that, in the mysterious dispensations of God's providence, his blessed Mother elected to exhibit that predilection and dispense those favours of which she has been lavish to so many favoured spots in this country. I do not scrutinize the motives nor the probabilities of these manifestations. I recognize their proof in the faith and the acceptance of numerous generations, and, where all revelation is a mystery, I find no difficulty in crediting the supernatural where Mary is the instrument and the object.

Under the shadow of the sombre Tramesaygues, and on the banks of an unimportant stream, modern Bourisp lies in quiet repose. Its newly-slated spire may be seen at

some distance in the valley, and it forms the chief object as one enters the village by a narrow road, through an avenue of pleasant trees, that afforded agreeable coolness to the pilgrim suffering from the noonday sun. On entering the village I made inquiries for the hostelry. The woman to whom I addressed myself was winnowing corn at her door, and could neither speak nor understand French; but she pointed to a young girl, who courteously offered to show me the way. On reaching the inn, we found that the doors were locked and the host and his servants absent at the market at Arreau; whereupon my fair guide requested that I would accompany her to her mother's house for repose and refreshment. I gladly accepted her hospitality, and soon found myself in a large room in the best house of the village, where the family were sitting with a Spanish priest, who had come across the frontier to visit them, and was giving lessons in Castilian to the young ladies. They evinced much interest in myself and in the object of my visit, and when I told them that I was an Irishman, who desired to extend the honour of our Lady in his native land by the narration of the marvels exhibited by Her in the Pyrenees, they overwhelmed me with kindness, causing me to feel as if I had gone back to those ancient ages of faith where the fireside of the villager was the hostel of the wayfarer, where the stranger was never refused a bed or a meal. The curé, who had been appointed only recently to the parish, being absent, also at market, the good mother of the family deputed her son to accompany me to the church and explain all objects of interest—an office which he discharged with much intelligence and feeling. It was edifying to witness the earnestness with which this family detailed to me the history of our Lady of Bourisp, and the devotion and affection with which they were imbued towards her. The name of my guide and entertainer was Mademoiselle Françoise Donney, and I record this incident as illustrative of the simplicity, hospitality, and piety to be found in the Pyrenean villages.

The parish and church of Bourisp are dedicated to St. Orens; and as this is a name not familiar to most English readers, although well known in the Pyrenees, it may be desirable to prelude my notice of the sanctuary by some account of the life of its patron. Moreover, we shall meet with his name again when we come to speak of St. Savin and its antiquities. St. Orens was born at Huesca, in Aragon, not very remote from the Pyrenean frontier. His father was Duke of Urgel and Governor of Catalonia, and both he and his wife Venance were held throughout the province in a respect that amounted to veneration. The youthful Orens early exhibited his preference for a religious life, and with the consent of his pious parents gave over to his brother his portion of the inheritance. The brother dying soon, the entire estate reverted to Orens, who sold it, and distributed its produce among the poor. Thereupon he withdrew into a desert, near the valley of Lavedan, and there he constructed for himself an oratory, where he led a saintly life in austerity and heavenly contemplation.

Traversing the lonely vale of Argèles, before reaching the sombre gorge of Pierrefitte, lies the road to Villelongue and Ortiac, from the top of which may be obtained the finest view of the Pyrenean panorama. A rude pathway, which now-a-days is seldom trod, conducts from this road to the Val Caprasie—*Vallis Caprasia.* It is a most solitary spot; the only noise that disturbs its silence is that of the waters of the lake Isaby, sometimes rushing down the precipices, sometimes pouring over the rocks in foaming cascades. After a tedious ascent, one arrives at the ruins of an ancient chapel on a plateau crowned with trees and surrounded by small fields. The shepherds seem to have completed the destruction which time had left undone, and in several instances used the stones of the old oratory for the construction of their cabins. For many years, and up to the period of the Revolution, the people of these valleys were accustomed to come on the first of May in pilgrimage to this spot, to celebrate the festival of

their patron, and supplicate his intercession for their wants spiritual and corporal. It was here that St. Orens so long lived in solitude and sanctity.

The great reputation of his holiness spread far and wide; and it is said that a voice from heaven announced him as the successor of St. Ursinien, in the see of Auch. He refused the dignity; until, warned by a revelation, he yielded to the designs of God and was consecrated Bishop of Auch about the year 400. His first efforts were directed to the extirpation of idolatry, which still prevailed in many parts of the diocese. He demolished the temple of Apollo, which stood on a hill near the city, and erected a church in its place in honour of the martyrs St. Cricy and St. Juliette. He is reported at this period to have performed many miracles. Among his episcopal avocations he found time for study, and composed a poem in Latin, entitled *Commonitorium*, being a metrical treatise upon the truths of religion. It is praised for its elegance of expression and vigour of thought; some fragments of it have been published recently, and a translation in French has been commenced by M. Vincent Bataille, the author of the poems on Bétharram and Buglose, which it is hoped he may complete.

Orens delivered the city of Auch from the barbarians, who had ravaged Lugdanum, now known at St. Bertrand de Comminges, and various other remains of the Roman empire. At this same period, St. Exupère, another child of the Pyrenees and Bishop of Toulouse, repulsed the enemy by the aspersion of holy water, as they rushed to the assault. The deliverance of Auch is still celebrated annually in that city, on May 6, when the relics of St. Orens are carried in procession. In commemoration of the fact that, as the enemy were attacking the city warmly on the right, St. Orens was obliged to commence his procession on the left, which is contrary to the usual rubric, the same practice is observed upon these anniversaries.

The date of his death is much controverted, but it is

supposed to have taken place about the year 439. Orens had long looked forward to the day of his death with a holy desire, and used to term it his '*dies natalis.*' 'Our end,' he writes in his *Commonitorium*, 'has no ending; and death, which causes us to die, dieth perpetually itself. This movement, which is continual, and this sentiment, which is everlasting, should make man understand that his life is in eternity, and that death is the road to it.'

> Nam finis noster finem non accipit, et mors
> Qua primò morimur, perpetuo moritur;
> Victuro semper motu, sensuque manente,
> Omnis perpetuo tempore vivit homo,
> Vivit homo! *

His death was remarkable in many respects. When he perceived that his end was approaching, he received the holy *viaticum* with profound humility and fervour; and it is recorded that while the consecrated particle still reposed upon his faltering tongue, he beheld in glorious vision his lord and master Jesus surrounded by a multitude of angels, summoning him to come and take the place prepared for him at the right hand of his Father. Two eye-witnesses have borne testimony to this luminous apparition; while a heavenly odour, perceptible to everyone, filled the room with celestial perfume. He was buried in the oratory of St.-Jean de l'Aubespine, *Sancti Joannis Albispinei*, which at that time changed its name to that of St. Orens. It still stands, and is now called the Church of the Immaculate Conception. His tomb became the object of public veneration, and many miracles worked at it attested his sanctity.

About the middle of the tenth century, Bernard le Leriche, Count of Armagnac, built at Auch the monastery of St. Orens. The body of the saint was removed from its tomb and translated to Toulouse, at the end of the eleventh century, by Bernard de Seilhac, third prior. A portion of his relics was given to his native city of Huesca, and the account of their translation fills an entire volume

* *Comm.* i. 295.

written in Spanish. The ivory horn, with which he used to summon the faithful to prayers, is still preserved, and until lately was used for the same purpose on the three last days of Holy Week. The monastery of St. Orens in Lavedan was celebrated for many years on account of the miracles that were constantly worked at the shrine of the saint, especially in cases of persons possessed by evil spirits. Some of his bones, and the iron girdle which he wore constantly, were preserved at this monastery during a long time. Thus, Huesca, where he was born; Auch, where he died; Lavedan, where he lived in poverty and mortification; Toulouse, where he governed with glory and renown, have each in their possession a portion of the relics of this great apostle of the Pyrenees.

I refer those of my readers who may feel interested in the history of St. Orens to the admirable account given of his life and miracles by M. De Lagrèze, in his learned work, 'L'Histoire religieuse de la Bigorre.' But in contemplating the life of its patron, I have too long wandered away from the spot which he had loved so well at Bourisp.

In early times, a kind of marsh, full of brambles, bushes, and currant trees, extended to the east of the church of St. Orens at Bourisp; near it is a fountain, which was called the fountain of our Lady. This spot was called Sescar, and near it stood the house of M. Sens, the proprietor. When taking his cattle to drink, he observed that one of them was in the habit of leaving the rest and making its way towards the marsh. On one occasion his curiosity led him to follow it, and he found it engaged in licking with its tongue a statue of our Lady that lay under the weeds. He returned to his house, mentioned what he had seen to his family, and instantly went to inform the priest. The curé, with several of his neighbours, accompanied the good man back to the marsh, and there they beheld the animal engaged as had been described. The priest took up the statue, and, followed by the people, carried it reverently to the parish church, where he proposed to keep it. On the next day, however, when they

went to the church at early dawn, the statue was not there. They returned to seek it at Sescar, where they found the ox caressing the image that lay in the same place from which the curé had taken it. They brought it back a second time to the church, and again a second time during the night it disappeared; but when they again returned to the marsh in search of it, it was not to be found. In their dismay, it occurred to them to have the ox brought from its stall; the animal on arriving began to bellow plaintively, as if grieved at not seeing the image, tossed up its head, and rushed wildly towards a hill to the southward, called Pouy. There it stopped at the brink of a fountain, near which the lost statue was found lying. The priest again took it up and once more carried it back to the church of St. Orens, followed by the people, but on the next day it disappeared again for the fourth time. It was again found in the marsh at Sescar.

It was now apparent to the curé and the people that it was at Sescar that our Lady desired that her statue should remain, and that it would be not only useless but impious to make further efforts to retain it in their church. Accordingly, a small oratory was erected at the favoured spot. Many graces were received, both spiritual and corporal; wonderful cures were wrought, and the offerings of the visitors became so abundant that, in due time, they were enabled to replace the modest chapel by the handsome church which now occupies its site. A popular tradition affirms that an unknown architect gave the plan and superintended the works, but that when the building was finished he disappeared, without leaving name or trace. It was said, further, that invisible hands assisted the workmen. It was found each morning that the work of the preceding day had been considerably advanced, and the timber and stones which had been prepared, and were lying at a distance, were brought mysteriously during the night to the exact spot for which they were designed.

In memory of the day and the place on which the statue had been discovered, a cross was erected on the

verge of the fountain: on one side was the image of our Saviour crucified; on the other that of his blessed Mother, surrounded by angels. More recently there has been erected another pillar, with the inscription—

FONTAINE DE L'APPARITION DE LA VIERGE.
Monument érigé en 1867.

In further commemoration of the event, an annual solemnity takes place on Ascension Thursday, when the magistracy and notables of the valley attend, and the revered image is carried in procession from the church to the Pouy, where it was originally found. Covered with ornaments of great value, it is placed under a richly-decorated pavilion. The chief men of the district, with lighted tapers in their hands, bear the canopy, and the procession traverses the narrow streets, which are strewn with flowers, until it reaches the Pouy, while the air resounds to the melody of *cantiques* and litanies, re-echoing the oft-repeated ejaculation, 'Holy Mary, pray for us'—'*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!*'

Baron d'Agos, the pious chronicler of Bourisp, has given a description of one of these solemnities, which cannot fail to interest:—'I would it were allowed to those whose belief has been shaken by the tempests of life, or whose hearts have been wounded by the injustice of man, and who can nowhere find rest or repose, to witness this sublime and touching spectacle. Let such men come and rekindle their faith amongst these devout mountaineers, as they flock from all quarters to pay their homage to the Mother of God. There, upon this hill, surrounded by her children, whom she blesses, she will pour also over such hearts the balm of heavenly peace and consolation. For myself, I never can forget the impression of the magnificent spectacle (*spectacle grandiose*) which I once beheld on such an occasion. The brilliant sunlight of May irradiated the verdant meadows, fertilised by the waters of the Nestes; the cloud-hidden *pics* elevated their white heads above the forests of pine-trees; the neighbouring villages looked down lovingly upon the scene from their

airy heights; the church bells from many spires were ringing out constant peals; the perfumed flowers, the swelling voices, all proclaimed, in the face of nature, that Mary is queen and sovereign of the valley. It was my privilege, as guest, to carry a corner of the canopy—a privilege that was dearer to my heart than if I formed part of some imperial *cortége*; and the blessed taper, the symbol of faith, which I carried in my hands, I will ever keep as a precious memorial of that happy day.'*

As at Héas, so at Bourisp, this festival is designated by the people of the Val d'Aure as the 'adoration' of our Lady. I need not repeat what I have said on the same subject when speaking of Héas. The significance of the word 'adoration' is perfectly well understood at Bourisp, and it is never supposed or thought to imply that supreme honour which is due to God alone, and which cannot be transferred to any of his creatures, not even to Her, who 'is blessed among women.' It was formerly the custom among the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, such as Soulan, Vignec, Vieille, and Camperon, to make butter while this procession was taking place, uniting at a distance in the hymns and prayers. The butter then made was kept as a sovereign remedy against all sorts of sickness, and it is stated in an ancient manuscript that it never became sour or rancid. Indulgences have been granted at various times, obtainable on the feast of the Ascension and on all feasts of the blessed Virgin. Some date so far back as 1554, under the pontificate of Julius III.

A story of romantic interest, 'The Betrothed of Soulan,' is still recounted in the valley. I heard it from the lips of my kind entertainer, Madame Donney. M. Agos records it in his careful history, and I cannot properly omit it from this narrative. There lived in the old time, at Bourisp, a lord, who was the sovereign proprietor of the valley. He was licentious, tyrannical, and godless; in the wantonness of his lusts he issued an edict requiring

* *Notice sur N.-D. de Bourisp, dans la vallée d'Aure*, par Louis de Fiancette d'Agos, p. 33. (St. Gaudens, 1854.)

that every newly-married woman should share his couch on the first night of her nuptials, under pain of death and confiscation of her husband's goods.* A fair and virtuous maiden of Soulan, of the family of Loubet, was betrothed to a young man of the name of Bordes, who belonged to one of the most considerable families of the district. Their affection was warm, and their fond hearts throbbed for the moment which should see them united in the holy bonds of matrimony, when this savage ukase was published; bringing terror and shame to the maidens of the valley, but to none more than to her of Soulan. She was the first to be subjected to the brutal tribute, and she resolved to forego her attachment, if need were, rather than allow her honour to be polluted. But there was one source on which she relied for preservation. She repaired to our Lady of Bourisp, and there, in the agony of her chaste affections, she poured forth her fears and her affliction, and vowed to offer to the Virgin's altar the fairest heifer of her father's herd, if she should be preserved from this vile profanation.

At length the day of trial arrived, and surrounded by her relations and friends, and adorned in her wedding attire, more as a victim than a bride, she left the paternal roof to pledge her troth in the church of her intended husband, according to the custom of that country. She passed the old threshold, and her eyes looked down into the valley and rested upon the spire of Bourisp, just at that moment glistening with the sunrise. The sight of the sanctuary, that looked in the midst of that noble scenery like a diamond on a coronet, stirred within her all the hopes of her love and the apprehensions of her shame, and she inwardly renewed her vow, exclaiming, 'Holy Virgin, Mary, I give to you the fairest heifer that my father has upon the mountain, and deliver me from the power of this wicked lord' ('Sainte Vierge, Marie, je vous

* '. . . avait ordonné que toute nouvelle-mariée serait tenue, sous peine de mort et de confiscation de ses biens, de venir passer la première nuit de ses noces avec lui, dans son château.'—M. Agos, p. 37.

fais don de la plus belle vache que mon père a sur la montagne, et délivrez-moi de la puissance de ce mauvais seigneur'). She scarcely had uttered the vow, when, arriving at the bridge of Bahul, they beheld the chosen heifer coming down, with its bell on its neck, to place itself at the head of the procession. This occurrence was received as an answer to her vow, and she proceeded with a happier heart and brighter brow, until they got half-way between Vignec and Vieille, when a funeral knell suddenly rose up from the valley, tolling its lugubrious tones where all should have been 'merry as a marriage bell.'

'Who is dead at Bourisp?' they ask at the first house to which they come. 'The lord of Bourisp has been struck suddenly, and is no more,' was the reply. It is unnecessary to tell the relief and joy, mingled perhaps with some sadness, which must have been imparted to that bridal party by this awful announcement; and how lovingly they must have recognised the protection of Her who seldom fails to succour her votaries in their darkest hour, and thus proves herself 'consolatrix afflictorum,' as well as 'salus infirmorum.'

The sacrificial heifer continued to advance at the head of the procession, was duly transferred in thanksgiving to our Lady of Bourisp, and became the property of the church. The village tradition says that up to the Revolution its breed was much sought after throughout the district. The bell which she carried was kept until 1740 at the church, when it was lent to a farmer whose cattle were suffering from disease, and by whose family it is still preserved; and although often taken as an amulet against distemper to the remotest parts of the mountains, it never has been lost or injured. The castle of the 'mauvais seigneur' has crumbled to the dust; a few years ago its ruins were still to be seen—not a stone of it now exists; his very name is forgotten, while that of the intended victim of his profligacy is remembered and mentioned with honour and respect, and the spot upon which stood her dwelling is visited as a shrine. It is

only within a few years that the house was demolished; the lintel of the doorway bore an inscription commemorative of the event.

Inscriptions on the house doors or external walls are frequently found in those valleys. They often convey allusion to some family event, or yet again to the name of the family; as at Azet, on the lintel of a house belonging to one Lassus, *Dieu de Lassus, loge-nous là-sus.* At the entrance to Soulan there is an inscription on a doorway: *Memento mori; In omnibus respice finem.* Again, at Bazus: *Qui me trompe me perd.* Generally, there are the monograms of our Saviour, I.H.S., and of his blessed Mother, A.M., intertwined or separate, as if expressive of an act of faith or a safeguard against misfortune, like the mysterious blood of the lamb sprinkled upon the Hebrew homes. I remember a chapter in one of Mr. Kenelm Digby's beautiful books, 'Ages of Faith,' upon doorway inscriptions on old English houses in Catholic times. There was one on the porch at Sawston Hall, near Cambridge, that comes to my mind's eye with many loving recollections.* How it would delight Mr. Digby's instinct for

* Since writing the above, Mr. K. Digby has published another volume of his simple, pious poetry, *Little Low Bushes.* In this there is a poem called 'Sawston Hall,' in which he portrays one of its former owners as follows:—

The master of the mansion would be there,
A tall, thin figure, with fine silvered hair;
The Major he was called by those who came,
But Huddleston was his ancestral name.
* * * * *
His ways were gentle, to all others sweet
And simple as the lads that fill the street.
No harshness or severity was there;
His learning he would daily bring to bear
On all the passing matters of the day
In such a mild and confidential way,
You knew not which to wonder at the most,
His sense or inability to boast.
* * * * *
So now you have his portrait standing there,
As if to that old house you did repair.
It was a face Velasquez' hand should paint,
The English gentleman, a scholar, saint.

I have copied with deep emotion the foregoing extract from Mr. Digby's vivid description of a noble character now passed away, to whose connection and kindness I have been indebted for some of the happiest days of my life.

ancient piety to read these doorway inscriptions, still so numerous in the very Catholic Pyrenees!

There is a curious relic of paganism at Soulan, a votive altar of white marble, which now serves as the pedestal of a cross. The first two lines of the inscription, in which the name of the god is supposed to have been recorded, have been obliterated; but on the third there may be read the name of a woman, *Modesta*, who is believed to have erected it, with the usual formula—V.S.L.M., *votum solvit lubens merito*. It is thought that this altar was sacred to the divinity that gave its name to Soulan, as there is still visible an S, being the initial letter of the name.

While writing these pages, I mentioned at Luchon to a Protestant Englishman, of cultivated taste and liberal mind, that I was engaged upon a work in elucidation of the devotion to our Lady in the Pyrenees. He asked me if it was a devotion of recent origin? and then abruptly questioned me as to whether I could give him any information respecting the ancient deities that were popular in the time of the Romans. He was far too wellbred to have intended any profane satire in his question, but it struck deep into my heart as exemplifying the difference between Catholic and Protestant inspirations. While the Catholic humbly employs himself in devout enquiry regarding the places wherein the Mother of God is honoured, and where her undoubted power has been miraculously exhibited, 'ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,' the Protestant philosopher—for my friend was a philosopher—employs his leisure in investigating the traces of the topic divinities of paganism, Abellion and Barsa, Lixonius (Luchon) and Astoilane (St. Béat), and others, innumerable and transient as the sands on the seashore.

But we must not forget our dear Bourisp in these disquisitions, and I will atone for this digression by recounting a couple of the miracles worked at its shrine. The lord of Bazus had been married many years, and notwithstanding his earnest desires and prayers, no son had been

born to inherit his large possessions. Accompanied by his wife, he made a pilgrimage to our Lady of Bourisp; they went with bare feet and presented as an offering at her altar a baby in wax and two silver hearts. They had Mass said for their intention, and withdrew in great humility and confidence, their feet naked and their heads uncovered. During the following year these noble pilgrims were again seen at the altar of Bourisp, but their hearts were now full of gladness, and they knelt in thanksgiving for the heir which had been sent them in acknowledgment of their vow. They brought, as their *ex-voto*, a complete set of vestments in green satin, which still is preserved in the sacristy. There was a poor woman who lived at Louret, who had given birth to nine children only to lose them all successively. In her sorrow she made a pilgrimage to Bourisp, and on the next following occasion brought forth a healthy babe who survived to console her much-tried heart. Many other miraculous events, through the intercession of the Virgin of Bourisp, are told in the Val d'Aure, but are not of sufficient authenticity to authorise their record in this notice. Whenever any public calamity occurred, the Commune of Bourisp never failed to have recourse to their beloved patroness, especially on occasions of drought, to which that country was frequently subject. Several instances of these supplications and their successful results are recorded, especially one which took place in 1733, and which is mentioned in all its details by M. Agos.*

The church of Bourisp does not present much architectural interest. There are indications that the windows, which are pointed Gothic, had been repaired at several epochs; but the doorway, which is generally ornamented with sculpture in the churches in this valley, is plain. The high altar of coloured marble is handsome; there is a curious porch and two naves, but the most remarkable characteristic of the church is its old fresco paintings. Many churches in these valleys, such as that of Cazaux,

* *Notice sur N.-D. de Bourisp*, p. 49.

on the road to the Lac d'Oo, are decorated in a similar quaint style. In these remote valleys, where education had not shed its doubtful light, it was necessary to instruct the people by the eye as well as by the ear, and they were enabled to study in pictures that which was sealed to them in books. Hence these rude pictorial illustrations on the walls of the old churches, which are so common in the Pyrenees and in most Catholic countries.

On the walls of the porch at Bourisp are represented, in white and black, the Seven Capital Sins, indicating that the soul possessed by any of them is excluded from the body of the church. Each sin is personified by a woman in different positions, driven forward by the devil, who keeps her in thrall: Gluttony holds a glass in her hand, and is mounted on a pig; Sloth, with her arms crossed, is mounted on a donkey; Lust is astride on a he-goat; Pride is represented by a woman richly attired, with a feather in her hat, and mounted upon a lion; Avarice grasps a purse, and is mounted on an unknown wild beast; Anger is represented by a woman tearing her hair, and mounted on a dragon with a fiery tongue; and Envy, by a woman holding up a mirror, and mounted upon horseback. The roof and side walls are covered with frescoes. Two medallions on the roof represent Enoch and Elias, the only two of mankind who have not passed through the gates of death. There is a glaring picture of the last Judgment, with the angel blowing the trumpet, and uttering the awful words, *Surgite mortui, venite ad judicium.*

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum,
Coget omnes ante thronum.

There may be seen also the tree of the genealogy of the blessed Virgin; and near the lateral window are the monograms of Jesus and Mary. The symbols of the Virgin on the roof are each accompanied by an appropriate legend. Thus there is *Palma*, a palm-tree; *Virga Jesse*, a branch; *Pulchra Luna*, the full moon; *Electus ut Sol*, the noonday

sun; *Porta Cœli*, a gate; *Plantatio Rosæ*, a rose-bush; and so on.

The miraculous image of the Virgin no longer occupies its place over the high altar. Like that at Sarrance, it has been removed to a side altar at the left, which is not considered to be its proper position. It differs from similar statues in the Pyrenees, inasmuch as that the face and head are black. It is considered to belong to the style of the twelfth century, if not to a period more remote: it is stiff and inelegant and is wanting in beauty of form or expression. The architect who made the altar, M. Fevrière d'Asté, was commissioned to execute a crown in wood for this statue. He made it too small, so that, to enable it to fit properly, he was obliged to take away two bits of wood from the back of the head. These fragments were taken as valuable relics by some pious people who were present, and they put them in boxes, which they carefully locked. A few days after, one of them going to look at his treasure found that it had disappeared; and on informing his friends, they found that their relic also was gone, and no trace of it was ever found. At the time that I saw it, the statue was draped with a white veil and a robe of variegated silk, which was more tawdry than appropriate. The Virgin carries the infant Jesus on the left arm: the divine Child holds a book in his left hand, and with his right is in the act of giving his benediction. At the right side of this altar there is a small gilt statue of our Lady of the Rosary; and behind the miraculous image there is a large picture, representing our Lady giving the beads to St. Dominic.

Not being able to procure accommodation for the night at Bourisp, I went on to Vieille-Aure, which is the chief town of the Canton, at a short distance along the banks of the stream. Here my lodging was not too luxurious, in a quaint *auberge*, 'chez Mainveille,' but quite suitable to the scanty needs of a pilgrim. 'Mine host' was a burly sturdy farmer, who had just returned in excellent spirits from the market at Arreau. In the large kitchen,

in which I was received upon my arrival, there were two comfortable-looking beds, one of which was occupied by himself and his wife, and the other by his daughter, a comely young woman about twenty-two years of age. He told me that he was one of twelve children, all of whom had been born in one of these beds; that his father, grandfather, and great grandfather had died in that bed, and that he hoped to die in it likewise. So much, thought I, for 'fixity of tenure' in the Val d'Aure. But M. Mainveille and the rest of his neighbours are proprietors of their little farms; they need not fear the dropping of lives, the falling-in of leases, eviction, or rise-rents; and, subject to human vicissitudes, may expect to die in the bed in which they were born. To one conversant with Irish tenants, these valleys would seem to be the very Arcadia of small farmers. They abound in corn, especially maize, and are rich in cattle. The high prices which have ruled in the meat market during the last years have favourably affected the Val d'Aure, and much improved the condition of its stock owners. Mine host and his family were excellent specimens of the prosperity and culture of a peasant proprietary.

But this state of things has been arrived at in France through a long and sanguinary revolution, acting upon a thrifty and laborious race. To achieve the same condition in Ireland a revolution not less complete, although perhaps unbloody, must take place. This revolution will be wrought through the present fierce agitation for 'fixity of tenure' and rents regulated by valuation; an enactment which will exterminate and blot out the class of small landlords in Ireland as effectually as the Convention and the guillotine extirpated the great ones from the soil of France. It may be permitted to doubt how far the result will transform the turbulent, suspicious, untruthful cottier into the contented, independent, just-minded peasant proprietor.

The rising sun was irradiating the majestic *pics* of Tramesaygues, and a thick haze was spread over the meadows at

its base, as I retraced my steps from Vieille to Bourisp. The village was still asleep, and I had to remain for a short time alone in the little square, outside the curé's house, before the door of the church was opened. I had the satisfaction of hearing Mass at the privileged altar of the Virgin: there were only a few of the villagers in attendance—some devout women, who, like Mary, were early at the sepulchre. The care of the church and parish is in the hands of a worthy secular priest; but I think it is to be regretted that it does not enjoy, like Poëylahun and Héas, the ministry of the fathers of Garaison.

When Mass was finished, I took my way on horseback, having for my guide a son of my late host, across the mountains, through Azet, to the valley of Louron. On ascending, the view over the entire of the Val d'Aure and of Bourisp is very beautiful. On the side of a hill to the left, high up like the nest of an eagle, is perched Soulan, which has been so often mentioned; and in memory of its rescued bride I saluted it from afar, and seemed to hear the death knell toll, as the wicked noble perished before the wrath of God. Indeed, at that moment the bells were ringing throughout the valley from many a village church, making echoes of holy harmony as they informed the sons of toil that the great sacrifice was about to be offered for their benefit and on their behalf.

The path was steep, although not precipitous, and lay over wild and barren mountains. My guide was garrulous, boastful, and disagreeable. As we jogged along he asked me if I carried pistols, and said that we were traversing a dangerous country; that the inhabitants were bad and ill-conditioned, and that I was lucky in having him for my companion. Shortly after having made this pleasant observation he became confused, and said we had lost the way, and as there was no track upon the sod, I began to doubt my luck, and think it not unlikely that we might bivouac for the night in some robber's cave. In a short time we came upon a gang of miners, employed at a mine of manganese on the top of the hill. Their dark visages,

swarthy with black dust and sweat, gave some colour to the warnings of my guide; but, with perfect civility, they put us upon the right road. It was with a pleasing sense of security that I found myself, in a couple of hours, seated at breakfast at Loudervielle, in a neat roadside country inn, served by the strikingly handsome, laughter-loving daughter of the host, and at my side my unpleasant cicerone voraciously sharing my repast.

I have gathered most of the materials of this notice from the work of the Baron d'Agos, entitled 'Notice sur Notre-Dame de Bourisp, dans la vallée d'Aure, ancien diocèse de Comminges.' In his preface he states that he drew his information chiefly from a MS. which had been confided to him by a respectable family of Bourisp, and the statements of which had been confirmed by the traditions current among the people.* I will conclude this narrative with a translation of the very appropriate prayer with which M. d'Agos closes his recital. The original will be found in the Appendix.

'Having now terminated the task which has been assigned to me, I have recourse again to thee, O Mother of God; and if my intention has been agreeable to thee, I supplicate thee to bless those for whom I pray: those who have taught me to love thee; those whom I love; those who have injured or offended me; those who shall read these pages, which, as a public homage of my attachment, I depose at the feet of thy venerated image—I, who, although unworthy, have been selected to extend the knowledge of that sanctuary which thou hast so much favoured. I will say to thee, with the Church, "We salute thee, O Mother of mercy, as our queen, our consolation in this life, our hope in the life eternal. Poor children of Eve, we cry out to thee from the depths of our

* 'J'ai été assez heureux pour pouvoir recueillir, sur ce sanctuaire bien-aimé les souvenirs de quelques personnes qui aiment à conserver les vieilles traditions, et je les ai trouvés conformes à un vieux manuscrit qui m'a été confié et qui porte plusieurs caractères respectables d'authenticité. Je me suis fait un devoir de ne rien mettre, dans mon récit, que je n'eusse puisé dans cet écrit ou dans la tradition.'

exile; wandering in this vale of tears, we invoke thee with our sobs and our sighs. Do thou, our advocate, bend down upon us one look of pity; and when our last hour

CANTIQUE DE NOTRE-DAME DE BOURISP.

Réveillez vos échos pieux,
Chrétiens fervents des Pyrénées;
Chantez les belles destinées
Que vous fit la Reine des Cieux,
Des Cieux!
Tendre Marie,
Mère chérie,
Tu choisis nos monts pour séjour.
Ah! de ton trône
Reine très-bonne,
Souris à nos hymnes d'amour!

O Bourisp, bourgade bénie,
Tressaille sous tes pics aigus,
Toi, que la Mère de Jésus
Pour son sanctuaire a choisie!

C'est à toi que sa sainte image
Fut donnée en signe d'amour;
Oh! qu'il fut bien pour toi le jour
Où tu reçus ce divin gage!

C'était en ce jour que la terre
Célébre avec tant de bonheur;
Où le Dieu, de la mort vainqueur,
Jésus retournait à son Père;

Et de ta main reconnaissante
Tu lui consacras un autel
Où la foule, au jour solennel,
Vient prier la Vierge clémente!

Quel tableau s'offre à notre vue!
Comme s'agitent dans les airs
Bannières et drapeaux divers
Qu'accompagne une foule émue!

shall arrive, present us to our Saviour JESUS, the glorious fruit of thy blessed womb. O clement, O good, O pious virgin Mary! Amen.' *

HYMN TO OUR LADY OF BOURISP.

Your pious echoes, fervent, wake,
Dear Christians of the Pyrenees,
And sing the happy destinies
Heaven's Queen for you hath deigned to make!
Above all other,
Cherished Mother,
Thou'st chosen our mountains for thy dwelling;
Then from thy throne,
Our Queen—our own,
Smile on our hymns, thy kind love telling!

Bourisp, village ever blessed,
Exult up to thy highest peaks,
For Jesus' loving Mother seeks
Her sanctuary, within thy breast.

In sign of lasting love, they say,
To thee her image pure was given:
When thou receivedst that pledge of Heaven,
How beauteous for thee was that day!

'Twas on that day, when throbbing earth
Doth celebrate, o'er Death victorious,
Ascending to the Godhead glorious,
The risen Saviour's second birth.

With hands of thankful gratitude
To Her an altar thou didst raise;
Round which, in Mary's love and praise,
Should throng the pious multitude.

What picture opens to the eye!
Banners and standards of all hue,
Where crowds their pilgrim path pursue,
And flout their colours to the sky.

* Appendix K.

Chants d'amour et cris d'allégresse
S'en vont en concerts tout joyeux
Redire à la Reine des Cieux
Des cœurs satisfaits la tendresse.

Et toi, répands, Vierge clémente,
A pleines mains biens et faveurs;
Couronne, encourage nos cœurs
Des dons de ta bonté puissante.

Donne au pécheur qui te supplie
L'espoir qui conduit au pardon;
Il bénira sans fin ton nom,
Ton nom qui le rend à la vie.

Obtiens au juste qui t'implore
D'aimer toujours, d'aimer son Dieu;
Et tous les ans, dans ce saint lieu,
Il viendra te prier encore.

Au mortel qui, plein d'espérance,
Vient dire à tes pieds sa douleur,
Réponds: 'Je t'exauce!' Et son cœur
Sans fin bénira ta puissance!

Loud hymns of holy love and joy,
In concert through the echoing air,
To chant our Queen's celestial care
Their tenderest melodies employ.

O clement Virgin, come and crown
With bounteous hand each grateful heart;
Thy rarest gifts of grace impart,
That thy great goodness may be shown.

To contrite sinner, grace imploring,
Inspire those hopes which pardon claim;
And he through endless time thy name
Shall bless, his heart to God restoring.

And for the suppliant just obtain
That which he seeks, God's love, God's grace;
And he shall thank thee in this holy place
Each year, while health and strength remain.

To him who, full of hopes and fears,
Pours out his sorrows at thy feet,
Reply: 'I grant thy prayer;' and meet
He'll bless thee, as he dries his tears!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF MÉDOUS.

OUR LADY OF MÉDOUS.

(Val de Campan.)

'A l'entrée de la vallée de Campan s'élevait, avant la Révolution, Notre-Dame de Médous, en Latin, *Sancta Maria de Melle dulci*, couvent habité jadis par les Capucins, et dont aujourd'hui il reste à peine quelques ruines.'—*Culte de la Sainte Vierge en France*, tom. iv. p. 445.

Je me rappelle que mon père
M'a raconté plus d'une fois,
Qu'ici, l'on voyait autrefois
Des humbles fils de saint François
Une demeure solitaire.

Vicomte de Castelbajac.

What a quiet, tranquil place is Bagnères-de-Bigorre! Nestled at the foot of the Pyrenean range, it has more of softness and repose than its sister watering-places, and yet it is not deficient in picturesque scenery nor in varied excursions. Then there are its pretty shops, with their gay assortments of native industry—fine wools and superfine lacework—its clean, pleasant streets, its Promenade de Coustous, with its shady alleys of plane and lime trees, its comfortable lodging-houses and hotels, its healthful mountain paths, and its civil inhabitants. It is agreeable to see the well-ordered *bourgeoisie* enjoying their evening gossip on the benches in the Coustous, while the more aristocratic class of loungers seek recreation in the Casino, at its concerts and balls. 'Streets, houses, streams, squares, all are clean—more than clean' ('tout y est paré'), says the editor of the new guide-book, and he says truly. The plain of Bigorre is considered to be one of the finest in France, and is not inferior to many in Italy. Nume-

rous watercourses descending from the glaciers—the Gave of Cauterets, the Adour, the Échez, and the Arros afford the highest irrigation to its meadows; and its system of agriculture does credit to the intelligence of its farmers, who have in nowise neglected the advantages so abundantly afforded by nature. The hills and valleys are no less well cultivated than the plain; and its mountains are celebrated for their lofty peaks, their blue lakes, their foaming cascades, and their rushing rivers. The richest harvest of the plain, however, is less valuable than the treasure possessed in its mineral waters—those rare streamlets, which give health to the infirm and vigour to the drooping, and which have rendered the district of Bigorre celebrated in ancient as well as in modern times; for to ancient Bigorre belonged Barèges, St. Sauveur, and Cauterets, as well as Bagnères.

Bagnères-de-Bigorre was known to the Romans under the name of *Vicus Aquensis*. A votive stone, discovered not long since among the ruins of the temple of Diana, leaves no doubt upon this subject: numerous coins, bricks, and other fragments, which are continually found in the upturning of the soil, give further evidence of Roman occupation, and show that Bagnères had been frequented by them for the use of its waters as well as a resort of pleasure. It was ravaged by the Vandals, who destroyed the baths that had been constructed by the Romans. It was pillaged also successively by the Visigoths, the Saracens, and the Normans. In course of time walls were built round Bagnères, and it became a place of some strength. It was taken and sacked by Henri de Transtamarre, and held for some time by the English; but there is little known of its history during a long period, except that of continued quarrels with its neighbours, particularly with those of the town of Campan. Bagnères was so fortunate as not to have been much engaged in the religious wars of the sixteenth century. She preserved the Catholic faith throughout all these troubles; but to propitiate the favour of the fierce Montgomery she occasionally sent him a tribute of butter and maize. The

queen, Jeanne d'Albrecht, frequented the waters, which are said to have had the happy effect of removing from her the stigma of barrenness. 'Elle étoit *bréhaigne*,' say the old chronicles, 'nos bains la rendirent féconde.' So that to Bagnères, if old parchments are to be believed, the world was indebted for the birth of Henry the Great.

The reputation of Bagnères advanced rapidly during the seventeenth century. Louis XV. sought the aid of its waters for the restoration to health of his son, le duc du Maine, whom he sent there under the care of Mme. de Maintenon, whose name has been given to one of the prettiest promenades of the neighbourhood. During the following century it was the favourite resort of the wealthy nobles of Gascony and Languedoc. The great lords of the court loved to visit it, especially the Dukes of Grammont and La Force, who held large possessions in Bigorre. There still lives in the traditions of Bagnères the recollection of a splendid *fête* given by the Duc de la Force, who was Seigneur of Ossun, at which all the guests appeared in the picturesque costume of the Ossunois. Mme. Cottin also inhabited Bagnères, and it was under the inspiration of its balmy atmosphere that she wrote her charming romance of 'Mathilde,' and idealised the noble character of Malek Adhel, of which I still preserve my boyhood's impressions. Poverty does not exist in this neighbourhood; the villages and towns are neat and cleanly, and there is a wide-spread comfort among the people, although large fortunes are rare.

A French poet, Du Bartas, who visited Bagnères about the same time as Montaigne, has left us a graphic description of it, which may be applied to its condition at the present day:—

> Bagnères, la beauté, l'honneur, le paradis
> De ces monts sourcilleux, dessus lesquels, jadis,
> L'Hercule des Gaulois, non le bâtard d'Alcmène,
> Caressa, comme on dit, la princesse Pyrène:
> Les monts, enfarinés d'une neige éternelle,
> La flanquent d'une part: la verdure immortelle,
> D'une plaine qui passe en riante beauté;
> Le vallon Pinéan la ceint d'autre côté.

Elle n'a point maison qui ne semble être neuve,
L'ardoise luit partout: chaque rue a son fleuve,
Qui, clair comme cristal, par la ville ondoyant,
Va, toute heure qu'on veut, le pavé balayant:
Et, bien qu'entre son flot, aussi froid que la glace,
Et le bain chasse-mal on trouve peu d'espace,
Il retient sa nature, et ne veut tant soit peu
Mélanger, orgueilleux, son froid avec son feu.

The district of Bigorre was studded with numerous monasteries and churches, as if man in his piety desired to imitate the Creator in the mighty temples which he has erected to his own glory. The mission of the monks was social as well as religious. The rule of St. Benedict, which was generally followed, prescribed labour and study as well as prayer—the science which enlarges the understanding no less than the charity which conquers the heart. It was to the monks that Bigorre first owed its cultivation; it was they who first drove a plough over the plains of the Adour, and first reclaimed the barren mountain's savage side. It was the monks who founded the towns, such as St. Pé, St. Savin, and Larreule. It was they who imparted early civilisation to those valleys; who corrected and mollified the rude manners of the people and elevated their minds by instructing them in the knowledge of their duty to God and their neighbour. It was the monks who penned the first chronicles, which have preserved for us the history of those distant times; for, even amid the instruction of the people, time was found to compile those great historical works which, under the name of the community, have been continued from century to century, to the credit of literature and the honour of the Benedictine name.

These monasteries constituted in themselves almost a complete city; every trade was exercised within their walls. Many a studious monk put aside his pen to take up the gardener's spade, and exchange the meditation of the cell for the labours of the field. At the side of the tradesman's shop might be found the studio of the artist, and painting, sculpture, and music fraternised with the

lowliest crafts; for no art was too humble, no study too profound, to find its development in the cloister. The progress in the highest art made by the monks is still shown in the carvings in wood and stone which are to be found amid the ruined abbeys, and which are venerable memorials of the association of faith and imagination, of piety and skill. The Revolution dispersed but did not entirely destroy the exquisite books that were written on vellum by the monks of St. Savin, Sarrancolin, Escaledieu, and other abbeys. Does the impure and impious literature which it has given in their stead repay for the loss of those rare productions?

The Pyrenean monasteries, like those in all other countries, were not only model farms, houses of refuge, and homes of the poor, they were also the primary schools and colleges of the country. The seclusion of these valleys was favourable rather to the development of austere virtue than to the exercise of restless ambition. Yet they had their days of worldly glory and power, which perhaps may have tended to their decline rather than to their stability. They formed the strongholds of resistance to the invasions of the Saracens and the Goths, and they combated heresy wherever it raised its head, whether under the standard of Virgilius or Vigilantius, of Calvin or of Luther. A day, however, came when, notwithstanding all its useful and splendid services, monachism seemed destined to disappear from the soil of France. The revolutionary axe spared neither the head of the monk nor the roof of his cell, neither the altar of God nor the grave of his servants. Attacked first by calumny and sarcasm, and next by fire and the sword, it would almost seem as if these noble institutions were doomed to perish for ever. But a few terrible years passed away, the demon of the Revolution was chained, and Religion lifted her head and opened her beloved retreats once again; and convents and monasteries rose rapidly, as if from their former ashes, to adorn and fertilise the land where they had anciently flourished.

In the outskirts of the pretty town of Bagnères a new monastery, with a beautiful Gothic church, has sprung up as if with the rapidity of magic. The monks have again taken their old place; they again walk the streets, sandalled and bareheaded, as of yore. They are clad in the same sombre, penitential habit, and their voices are heard in choir as though they had never ceased to chant. The Church of the Carmes constitutes one of the great attractions of a residence at Bagnères to the devout Catholic. There the confessional is ever thronged, the pulpit resounds with an inspired and practical eloquence, such as those who have heard the Père Charles or the Père Alexandre must ever remember, and the numerous services are conducted according to the strictest rubric of the order. The sons of St. Theresa have succeeded to those of St. Francis; but while we rejoice in the glory of God's house as typified in their monastery, we may be allowed to mourn over the recollections and the ruins of another order, 'des humbles fils de St. François,' that in its day filled the neighbourhood with its sanctity and renown. The present general of the Carmelites, Father Xavier, is also their restorer. He is as remarkable for his profound piety and spirit of mortification as he once had been in the world for his incredulity and fashion. He was converted as if by a miracle, and, like other remarkable converts, offered his remainder of life to the service of God, and sought expiation for his errors in the restoration of the illustrious Carmelite Friars, in which he has been worthily assisted by the accession of Father Hermann as a brother.*

The site of the once famous monastery of Médous is within three kilomètres of Bagnères, and I visited it with some emotion.† There is not a trace even of its ruins.

* 'A leur tête s'avance un homme, élevé non dans les principes d'un mysticisme outré, mais au milieu des plaisirs du monde. Appelé merveilleusement à embrasser une religion que son enfance avait appris à maudire, il vient au xix^e^ siècle, renouant la chaîne brisée des traditions du moyen âge, restaurer la vie monastique au fond des Pyrénées.'—De Lagrèze, *Hist. lit. de la Bigorre*, p. 158.

† 'Voici l'ancienne capucinière de Médous, avec son parc, sa source volu-

A comfortable modern villa, tenanted by an English Protestant gentleman, occupies the position of the monastery, and the stables and coach-house are built upon the spot where the chapel stood. The only remnants of the monastic days are two magnificent chesnut trees, one of which stands in the lawn, spreading its luxuriant branches over the highway; the other flourishes on a slight eminence behind the stables, and presents a trunk of unusual girth, being twenty feet in diameter, while its venerable top is at a height that seems to touch the sky. When the monastery was destroyed, the statue of our Lady was concealed and preserved for happier times. This statue is of Carrara marble, was executed in Rome by a sculptor of the seventeenth century, and was presented to the convent by the Countess d'Asté, whose family conspicuously favoured and protected the old Capuchins. It is now placed over the high altar in the modest church of the village of Asté, at the opposite side of the Adour. As a work of art it possesses much merit. It is remarkable for the perfection of its details: it has all that sweetness of expression which is to be found in the works of the first Italian masters, and is a life size. It is the finest statue of our Lady that I have seen in any of the Pyrenean sanctuaries. Popular tradition asserts that when Médous was ravaged, this statue was miraculously conveyed through the air to Asté; but the received belief is that it was concealed by some pious persons during the Reign of Terror, and given to the church at Asté when tranquillity was restored.

Médous has not been so fortunate as the other sanctuaries that I visited, as it has not yet been restored to its former pious purposes. There prevails, however, a feeling in the neighbourhood that it is destined to be restored to the service of God once again. It is even said that although it has been owned by various proprietors, none of them has held it for any length of time; that their affairs invariably have gone badly; and that one after another they have been

minouse, sa grotte sombre, son trou ventilateur et son *chataignier phénomène*.' —*Bagnères Guide* (1868), p. 41.

obliged to sell it at a loss, and retire from a spot that so long had been allotted to a higher service.

There is extant an interesting history, which illustrates the ancient influence of the Virgin of Médous. It is told on the spot (not, however, by the English occupier), and is recorded in the archives of Bagnères. There exists in the public library at the Musée a manuscript record of the transactions of Bagnères-de-Bigorre and its dependencies, from 1171 to 1789, a period of 618 years, compiled by Father Laspales, a Capuchin. It is in folio, contains about fifteen hundred pages, is written in the clearest and most beautiful caligraphy, without a correction or an erasure, and occupied about twenty years in transcribing. I was permitted by the courtesy of the very intelligent librarian repeatedly to consult it, and was thus enabled to verify the details which I am about to narrate as the Story of LIBOYE.

On January 17, 1648, the consuls of the city addressed to the judge a requisition, in which they set forth certain events worthy of remark, as much for the glory of God as for the edification of men—events which had happened half a century before, without yet having been recorded in writing, partly on account of the civil wars, partly through the negligence of the people—and they concluded by asking that the judge might be pleased to institute an enquiry into these events, and for that purpose issue a commission with power to examine any persons still living who had knowledge of them; that the result of such enquiry should be duly reported to the judge and entered upon the register of the town-hall, to serve as a memorial to all posterity.

In consequence of this demand, a commission was appointed, under the presidency of Roger de Berné, Doctor of Law, and advocate of the sovereign court of Parliament of Toulouse. A registrar or reporter (*greffier*) and four notaries took down officially the declarations of the witnesses, who were of the number of eighteen, and all of them octogenarians—three of them had attained their

hundredth year. The following is a faithful analysis of their depositions; and I have endeavoured to preserve, as much as is possible in a translation, the quaintness of style of the original.

'The year which preceded the contagion, by which the city of Bagnères was afflicted, that is to say, the year 1588, the winter was so severe that the river Adour was frozen. One could walk on the ice; to enable the mills to grind the corn, they were obliged to break the ice, which was done with difficulty. The bread used to be so hard that a sharp knife scarcely could cut it; they often were obliged to put it into the oven to get the frost out of it; and never before nor since has such a frost been seen.

'The same year rain fell in such quantity that the water broke into all the houses of the town and overflowed the bridge on the Adour; and never had such an inundation been seen. The same year, on the vigil of Easter, snow fell so deep that it was not possible to go in or out of the city, nor to walk in the streets, and the animals going to market died on the way; and never had such a quantity of snow been seen. The same year, on the eve of St. John, it hailed so heavily that the birds were killed by it, the trees shattered, and the roofs of houses broken; and never had such terrible hail-showers been seen.

'The same year the waters of all the rivers and fountains of Bagnères, ordinarily so pure and clear, were infected by a species of strange animalculæ, and neither man nor beast could drink them until filtered; and never had there been seen water so fetid. A short time before the contagion, trout of extraordinary length circulated in the street channels; and never had there been seen fish so enormous nor in so great a quantity.

'A short time previous to the contagion the dogs and cats did nothing but utter plaintive and lamentable cries, both day and night; and never had there been heard such woful howlings and mewings.'

Now, at this same period, there dwelt at Bagnères a poor woman, remarkable for her extraordinary virtue. She

was born at Baudéan, her name was Domenge Liboye, and she had married a labouring man, who lived near the dovecots (*les palommières*) of Bagnères. Previous to the outbreak of the plague Bagnères had enjoyed much prosperity. John and Catherine, sovereigns of Navarre and Counts of Bigorre, visited it, and by their presence attracted considerable numbers of the nobility, not alone of their own dominions, but also of France. Baudéan is close to Bagnères, and it was exposed to the corruption of manners and morals which followed the half-Italian courts of Henry II. and Henry III., who also were frequenters of these waters. But in the midst of the surrounding licentiousness, Domenge Liboye preserved her life of purity and virtue unsullied. She is described to have been of lofty stature and well made, her graceful figure setting off to advantage the short gown and scarlet *capulet* of the Pyrenean costume.* The Canton of Baudéan, where Domenge was born, is highly productive, requiring little labour to secure an abundant crop. Nevertheless, she was ever active and attentive to her work, realising the prudent woman of the Scripture, who is the ornament and glory of her husband's house, and whose servants are well clad and never idle. 'Et de nocte surrexit, deditque prædam domesticis suis et cibaria ancillis suis.' (*Sap.*) But unfortunately she soon lost her husband, and was left a widow at an early age, with one little girl, whom she called Andrielle. We are told by Father Laspales that this widow's child grew up 'beautiful as an angel.' At the death of her father she was only fourteen years old. She and her mother inhabited the suburb of Poueyand, and they never left their humble domicile, except to go to church or to market. She sat down in her grief, seeking no other

* The *capulet* is a very graceful piece of dress which is peculiar to the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, forming at the same time a head-dress and a mantle. It is a kind of hood (*capuchon*), made of very strong cloth, sometimes white as snow, sometimes bright as scarlet, covering the head and falling back on the shoulders and down to the hips. When it is cold or windy, the women wrap it round them, carefully enveloping their neck and arms; and when it is fine, they fold it in a square and carry it on their head with a singular effect, like a quadrangular cap or *bi'ret*.

comfort but religion and the companionship of her daughter. Her piety and retirement became proverbial in the neighbourhood; so that if it was desired to describe a person of devout practice, it used to be said, 'She will be one day another Liboye' ('Ce sera un jour une autre Liboye').

Constancy in affection and mourning was a prominent feature in Liboye's character; but she pined away in her seclusion, and seemed to decay as doth a flower without air. Her daughter Andrielle, although young, willingly accommodated herself to the manner of life followed by her mother. Whenever they went out they wore a thick veil, so that their neighbours could not perceive the havoc which sorrow, solitude, and austerity had made upon their countenances. They always went barefooted; and yet when they followed a religious procession no road seemed too rugged or stony for their macerated feet. Liboye had an especial devotion to our Lady of Médous, and she made frequent pilgrimages to her church on her knees, so that it became a saying among the people, 'There goes Domenge on her knees' ('Elle y va à genoux').

It is recorded that one day, in 1588, while at her devotions in the church, there appeared to her a beautiful lady, clothed in white, with a countenance beaming with kindness, who declared herself to be the Virgin of Médous. In a voice full of gentleness and solicitude she spoke to the poor and lowly Liboye upon the condition and interests of the town. She directed her to tell the priests and consuls of Bagnères that penance must be done and prayers offered to avert a heavy calamity which impended over their sinful city. She directed her to seek out the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, to inform them of the evils predicted, and to exhort them to do public penance for the criminal disorders which they had tolerated, if not encouraged. Liboye obeyed exactly the supernatural injunction, and recommended the consuls to inaugurate a course of penance by a procession to Médous; but her message was derided, her advice unheeded, and her warnings disregarded.

In a short time the plague manifested itself in the city, accompanied by all those calamities of frost, hail, and flood which have been described by the old chronicler. Five-sixths of the inhabitants perished, scarcely any escaping, except those whose means enabled them to fly from the devoted town and seek safety at a distance. An entire year elapsed after the cessation of the plague before those who had fled took heart to return, as it was thought that no less a time was necessary for the purification and disinfection of the country. With the ordinary thoughtlessness of humanity, the lessons of this visitation were soon forgotten; and, shortly after her return, one of the principal ladies of the city, Dame Simonne de Souville, called Mourelle, a light-hearted and giddy-pated woman of fashion, met Liboye, who was one of the few survivors, and banteringly said to her:—'Your plague after all was a foolish alarm; it hurt only the poor people, who could not take care of themselves, or get away.' This, it appears, was the opinion prevalent among the wealthy classes, who were unwilling to accept the announcement of his anger, which God had sent to them in the mortality of his poor. Thus has it often been in all times and in all countries. I have seen typhus fever rage amongst the poor, carrying them off like hecatombs, regarded as a harmless epidemic, to excite little compassion or precaution, until it invaded the mansions of the rich and bore them also daily away to the wide-open grave.

To this mocking lady's boast Liboye meekly replied, that it was not her part to draw conclusions; that she only had discharged her duty when she conveyed to the authorities the warning message with which the blessed Virgin had commissioned her; and that, in her opinion, the great dame and her peers would do better to invoke the mercy of God and avert his wrath by prayer and penance. 'For my own part,' she added, 'during the worst period of the plague, as well as before its outbreak, I never ceased my visits to the church of Our Lady of Médous. I daily beat my breast with a stone, imploring

from God and our Lady pity upon the unhappy people. Although the door of the church was closed during this awful time, whenever I knelt outside it and began to pray, it opened of its own accord and allowed me to enter.'

A few days subsequent to this conversation with Dame Simonne de Souville, the blessed Virgin appeared again to Liboye at Médous. She solicited her divine patroness to procure for her people a spirit of prayer and recollection in the place of that light irreverent tone which pervaded the society at Bagnères; but the answer she received was a direction to inform Simonne de Souville that the plague would break out shortly again; that the next time it would seek its victims among the rich and spare the poor, and that the thoughtless lady herself should be the first to succumb. 'I charge you,' continued the vision, 'to tell her this, so that she may be prepared, and by a good death atone for the errors of a careless life' ('Je te charge d'avertir celle-ci à propos, afin qu'une mort digne rachète les erreurs d'une vie qui en est si pleine').

After the lapse of a year the plague or 'contagion' returned as predicted, and Dame Simonne de Souville was the first to fall. She was interred in a cemetery on the road to Médous and Campan, called Montjoie; but in memory of this event, it has ever since been known as *Montjoie de Mourelle*. The plague slew its thousands, and when many had perished the distracted survivors remembered the prediction and advice of Liboye, and at last determined upon proceeding in procession, and humbling themselves at the feet of our Lady of Médous. All ranks and ages joined: the lady of fashion and the scornful scoffer had ceased to smile or to sneer. Liboye and her daughter, clad in white, bare-footed, and with lighted tapers in their hands, headed the procession. Under the guidance of the Dominican fathers it was renewed daily during nine days, at the expiration of which the plague entirely ceased. The procession was repeated annually, on August 2, in thanksgiving and gratitude, until the destruction of the monastery at the Revolution.

The consuls of Bagnères and the people felt so much indebted to Liboye that they resolved to make provision for her and her daughter during the remainder of their lives. But the only favour they would accept was admission into a convent, where they might devote themselves more completely to the love and service of God. The Huguenots having destroyed all the convents in Bigorre, the consuls sent Martial Fréchon, who was godfather to Andrielle, to accompany them to a religious house of the rule of St. Bernard, dependent on the abbey of Poublet in Catalonia, three leagues to the south-west of the abbey of Monserrat. Previous to their departure they were entertained at a sumptuous banquet, as though it were a wedding feast, and they were setting out on their bridal tour.

On the journey Liboye constantly foretold to her companions the different incidents that would befall them; and Andrielle announced to Martial Fréchon, who was childless and an old man, that God would yet bless him with offspring—a prediction which was verified in due course. When the travellers arrived within sight of the convent the bells began to ring; and on hearing their unexpected clangour, the nuns, who were ignorant of the approach of their coming postulants, assembled in choirs, and commenced to sing canticles of joy. The ringing of the bells assured them that some important arrival might be expected, and accordingly, with lighted candles, they assembled in a body at the doorway to receive the unknown strangers. The abbess greeted them with affection, and upon learning their astonishing history, she addressed herself to the high-born and noble sisterhood by whom she was surrounded, telling them that they all should welcome with thanksgiving Domenge Liboye and her daughter, who, although of lowly birth, were sent to them by the blessed Virgin herself to be their guides and companions.

Many years afterwards, Martial Fréchon made a pilgrimage to our Lady of Monserrat, and on his return

stopped at the convent of Bolbonne to ask for charity. He then learned that Liboye had died in the odour of sanctity, but that Andrielle still lived. He sent for her, and, under his beggar's garb, she joyfully recognised and welcomed her old guide and godfather.

Such are the facts which have been recorded, not by a monkish penman of the middle ages, but by a grave chronicler who wrote at a period when the minds of men had become infected by heresy and shaken by incredulity. They have not been extracted from the musty parchments of some abandoned cloister, but they are recorded in a solemn public document, witnessed by the authorities of the town, and preserved among its archives, where they may be inspected by any curious or disbelieving traveller. They have survived the ruin of the monastery of Médous and its chapel, and their authentic preservation is some consolation for the Vandalism which has converted the sacred shrine into an abode of luxury and ease. The late venerable Vicomte de Castelbajac has written some exquisite lines upon the ruins of Médous. I subjoin them, with a translation, which I fear fails to convey the simplicity and tenderness of the charming original.

Although Médous has been profaned, and no longer affords refuge and consolation to the infirm of soul or body, the spirit which animated its votaries still survives at Bagnères. The statue at Asté is frequently visited, and forms the object of a pious promenade to the inhabitants as well as to the casual visitors who are attracted by its ancient associations no less than by its beauty as a work of art. In the gloomy village church where it now stands may be seen some curious pieces of embroidery work, pictures executed by the delicate needle—one of them said to have been worked by Margaret of Valois, which had belonged to the Capuchin monastery at Médous.

The continuing devotion of the people to the blessed Virgin has exhibited itself strongly in their desire to place their good town under her protection. A high conical hill, called Bédat, dominates Bagnères on the west. It com-

mands a noble view, embracing the spires of episcopal Tarbes and the peaks of the Col d'Aspin—a combination of scenery that cannot be surpassed for variety and loveliness, especially when seen under the magical hues of a setting sun. Upon this hill there has been placed a colossal statue of our Lady, standing on a globe supported by lions, and with her feet on the head of the Old Serpent, and her hands extended in the attitude of blessing the town that lies beneath. I had the satisfaction to be present at its erection. It was placed on the pedestal on Michaelmas-day, and its solemn consecration took place on the following Sunday, October 3, 1868, being Rosary Sunday.

A procession proceeded from the parish church of St.-Vincent at Bagnères at 2 P.M., and ascended the steep hill, chanting *cantiques* and litanies. The effect was intensely devotional as well as most picturesque: the diversified costume of the people; the young girls belonging to the schools of the Daughters of the Cross (*Filles de la Croix*), in black dresses and long white veils; the boys belonging to the schools of the Christian Brothers, in scarlet uniform; the long line of priests, preceded by banners of the various sodalities, and, finally, the Carmelite Fathers, in their brown habits and white mantles and cowls, constituted a most imposing picture, as, followed by the entire population, they wound up the long tortuous hill that leads to the summit of Bédat. The hill itself was crowded with people, and as they ranged themselves round the statue and along the slopes, and Father Charles, flinging back his cowl, stood forth upon the pedestal and delivered a heart-stirring discourse on the honour due to the blessed Virgin, on the nature of her intercessory power, and on the increasing extension throughout France and the world of her '*culte*,' I comprehended the extent to which Catholic faith exists in the heart of this great and enlightened country. The town was illuminated brilliantly in the evening, as though it was to celebrate some mighty conquest; and was it not

a conquest, in these days of infidelity and scepticism, to contemn the sneers of the infidel, overcome the timidity of the lukewarm, and, in a place of fashionable resort like Bagnères, lift up the image of the Immaculate on its loftiest pinnacle for the honour and the reverence of the world?

The Bishop of Tarbes has granted an indulgence to whomsoever, in proper dispositions, shall say three paters and aves at the foot of our Lady of Bédat. In conclusion, it may be permitted to me piously to hope that the eyes of the eloquent and amiable Pastor Fossart, who directs the Protestant temple at Bagnères, and those of my Anglican brethren who have adopted that town for their residence, may sometimes turn to the Virgin of Bédat, and find in her contemplation that light and comfort which MARY rejoices to obtain for the humble in spirit and the pure of heart.

O Mary! when we think of the,
Our hearts grow light as light can be;
For thou hast felt as we have felt,
And thou hast knelt as we have knelt;
And so it is—that utterly,
Mother of God! we trust in thee!

*LES RUINES DE MÉDOUS.**

Je me rappelle que mon père
M'a raconté plus d'une fois,
Qu'ici, l'on voyait autrefois
Des humbles fils de saint François
Une demeure solitaire :
Là, s'élevait près du coteau,
Non loin du limpide ruisseau,
Une chapelle hospitalière
Toujours ouverte au pèlerin.
Jamais il n'y frappait en vain ;
Et le malheur et la misère,
La pauvre veuve et l'orphelin,
Y trouvaient toujours la prière
Et l'aumône du capucin.
Aussi de toute la vallée
Vers la chapelle on se pressait,
On y venait, on y priait,
Et l'âme, bientôt consolée,
A l'espérance renaissait.
Souvent une pieuse offrande
Près de l'autel se déposait,
Plus d'une modeste guirlande
Au mur sacré se suspendait.
Le vieux berger dans un saint zèle,
Des brebis qu'il faisait bénir,
Parfois à Dieu venait offrir
Et la plus blanche et la plus belle.
Là, plus d'un pauvre voyageur
Vint s'abriter contre l'orage,
Et chercher le toit protecteur
Du saint prêtre de l'hermitage.
Plus d'une fille du hameau
Y porta son vœu de sagesse,
Plus d'une mère le berceau,
Unique objet de sa tendresse.
A cet autel jamais, dit-on,

* 'Ces vers charmants sont de M. le vicomte de Castelbajac, ancien pair de France, sous la Restauration, si connu comme homme d'État et comme homme d'esprit.'—*M. de Lagrèze.*

THE RUINS OF MÉDOUS.

I do remember me so well,
In my young days, my father saying
That, in this place where we are straying,
In constant fast and earnest praying,
St. Francis' children used to dwell
Within their solitary cell.
There, where the hillock rises high,
Close to the limpid streamlet flowing,
The pilgrim found a sanctuary,
Refreshment and repose bestowing.
The tottering frame, the sorrowing mind,
The widow and her orphan train,
From the good Capuchin would find
Or alms or prayer to soothe their pain.
And thus, the valley all around
To the loved chapel hourly pressing,
In tears and sighs their sins confessing,
Hope's consolation ever found
In counsel meet and fervent blessing.
And often on the altar lay
The offering of some pious heart—
A modest flower, a garland gay,
Hung round the wall with simple art.
The aged shepherd from his stock,
By zeal and gratitude impelled,
For death or accident repelled,
Offered the whitest of his flock.
And often here, when tempest-tossed,
The weary traveller sought retreat;
But once the hermitage he crossed,
He feared nor flood nor blinding sleet.
Here many a maiden in her sadness
Sage sacrificial vow hath muttered;
Here many a mother in her gladness
Thanks for her baby saved hath uttered.
And at this altar it is known

Un oubli ne fut sans clémence,
Un repentir sans espérance,
Une espérance sans pardon.
Là, nulle douleur sans prière,
Nulle prière sans douceur,
Enfant, vieillard, joie ou malheur,
Tout bénissait le sanctuaire.
Mais aujourd'hui du vieux clocher,
Du manoir de la chapelle,
Hélas ! ne venez rien chercher ;
Le temps a d'une main cruelle,
Partout ici, porté sa faulx.
Il s'est ému dans sa colère
Et, renversant le monastère,
Brisant l'autel, le sanctuaire,
Il a détruit jusqu'aux ormeaux
Qui, de leur ombre séculaire,
Couvraient la place des tombeaux !

CANTIQUE EN L'HONNEUR DE L'INAUGURATION DE LA

VIERGE DU BÉDAT,

Près Bagnères-de-Bigorre, en octobre 1868.

Refrain.

Salut, ô Vierge du Bédat !
De Bagnères sois la patronne
Et du pays qui l'environne,
Monts, vals, coteaux et pays plats,
Groupés autour de la Madone,
Acclamons tous la Vierge du *Bédat.*

Fidèle au culte de Marie,
La Bigorre en différents lieux
Arbora l'image chérie
De l'auguste Reine des cieux.

Salut, etc.

Sweet clemency had ever scope;
Here penitence might always hope
God's pardon would compunction crown.
Here every sorrow had a prayer,
Here every prayer brought consolation;
Childhood, old age, high rank, low station,
All bless the shrine where none despair.
But now-a-days the sacred spire,
The chapel, and the friar's cell
Are sought in vain. Stranger, retire;
Sad ruin doth around thee dwell:
Destroying Time, with cruel doom,
His scythe in anger hath laid bare,
O'erwhelmed the altar, nor doth spare
The ancient graveyard nor the tomb:
The elm, that centuries had spread
Its branches o'er the hallowed dead,
Broken and withered, blighted lies,
No shade to screen them from the skies!

D. S. L.

CANTICLE IN HONOUR OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE STATUE OF

OUR LADY OF BÉDAT,

Near Bagnères-de-Bigorre, October 1868.

Chorus.

Virgin of Bédat! thee we hail!
Sweet patroness of bright Bagnères
And all the country lying near:
Far mountain, hillock, plain and vale,
Grouped round your own Madonna, Her
With one acclaim to Bédat hail!

To Mary's love and worship true,
Bigorre, in many a varied scene,
Hath raised aloft, to mankind's view,
The image blessed of Heaven's own Queen!

Pèlerin, grimpe avec courage
Vers la chapelle de *Héas*;
Les baisers de la Sainte Image
Font tant de bien quand on est las!
Salut, etc.

Plus accessible à la prière,
Notre-Dame de *Garaison*
A son élégant sanctuaire
Dans un ombreux et frais vallon.
Salut, etc.

Sur les bords riants de la *Neste*
S'offrent aux regards du passant
Des Madones d'un style agreste;
La plus antique est à *Nouilhan*.
Salut, etc.

Vingt villages formant la chaîne,
De His à Barbazan-Débat,
N'ont qu'une même Souveraine,
La bonne Vierge de *Piétat*.
Salut, etc.

Pestiférés dans un autre âge,
Bagnérais, c'était fait de vous!
Sans un dévot pèlerinage
A Notre-Dame de *Médoux*.
Salut, etc.

Une grotte miraculeuse
Auprès d'un limpide torrent
Ouvre une perspective heureuse
A Lourdes, clef du Lavédan.
Salut, etc.

Malgré ses titres de noblesse,
Les touristes la délaissaient.
Les canons de sa forteresse
A peine une fois l'an parlaient.
Salut, etc.

Lourdes, qui donc t'a rajeunie?
C'est un miracle, en vérité.
Le nouveau culte de Marie
A fait revivre la cité.
Salut, etc.

Pilgrim, with joyous courage fleet,
Mount up to Héas' chapel dreary;
To kiss that statue's holy feet
Brings rest and vigour to the weary.

Of easier access, 'tis said,
Our Lady of Garaison smiles
In a cool valley, where the shade
To meditative prayer beguiles.

By Nestes' verdant banks the eye
On many an image rude may rest;
On Nouilhan, antiquity
Its seal of reverence has impressed.

Full twenty villages between
The chain of Barbazan and His,
Own and proclaim one sovereign Queen,
Whose name Mother of Mercy is.

Men of Bagnères, in bygone age,
How pestilence had humbled you,
Till saved by holy pilgrimage
Unto our Lady of Médoux!

Close to a rugged grot, a stream
Its course miraculous began,
Foreboding happiness supreme
To Lourdes, the key of Lavédan.

Though rich in tales of war and glory,
The traveller passed it idly by;
And rarely heard that fortress hoary
Its cannon thunder to the sky.

What then has freshened up thy walls,
Fair Lourdes? A miracle, in truth,
Of Mary's bounteousness recalls—
Revives thy city's vanished youth.

Toi, Bagnères, ville thermale,
Tu reçois des flots d'étrangers,
Pour tes beaux sites sans rivale,
Tes églises et tes clochers,

Salut, etc.

Mais tu n'avais pas de Madone,
Objet d'un culte familier,
Que l'on pût nommer ta patronne,
Ta gardienne, ton bouclier.

Salut, etc.

Cette lacune regrettable
Disparaît, grâce au monument
Dressé pour la Vierge adorable
Sur un sublime emplacement.

Salut, etc.

Du mont *Bédat* la cime altière
Porte, en la rapprochant des cieux,
Éblouissante de lumière,
La Madone au front radieux.*

Salut, etc.

* I have inserted the above *cantique* rather to preserve it as a memorial of an inauguration at which I was present, than from any merit in the composition or the translation.

And thou, Bagnères, fountain of health,
A flood of strangers sweeps thy plains—
Thy scenes unrivalled, and the wealth
That decorates thy towering fanes.

But where is thy Madonna meek,
The friend familiar of the poor?
She, whom as patron all might seek,
Thy guardian, guide, and breastplate sure?

No more her absence we deplore!
A monument sublime attests
That she, the Virgin we implore,
Shall reign for ever in our breasts.

And haughty Bédat's loftiest height
Bears up to heaven in triumph now,
All glowing with celestial light,
Our Lady of the radiant brow!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF NESTES.

OUR LADY OF NESTES.

(VAL DE NESTES.)

Dans cette aimable solitude,
La Vierge Marie, autrefois,
De bénir faisant son étude,
Pour son autel fixa le choix. *Cantique.*

'La chapelle de NOTRE-DAME DE NOUILHAN remonte à la plus haute antiquité. Détruite en 1793, elle a été restaurée en 1856, sous les auspices de Monseigneur Laurence, évêque de Tarbes. Cette longue interruption n'a point affaibli l'amour de Marie pour ce sanctuaire vénéré ; car, depuis sa restauration, elle n'a cessée d'y répandre ses faveurs.'—*N.-D. de Nestes.*

I VISITED Garaison, for the second time, in the autumn of 1868. The venerable Superior had gone to attend the reception of a nun at a neighbouring convent; it was the vacation time, and there was profound silence and solitude throughout its courts when I entered them. A solitary priest was walking slowly under the shadow of the acacias, deeply engrossed in a book. I addressed myself to him and found that he was engaged with the history of our Lady of Nestes, from whose sanctuary he had returned only the day previous, and to which my pilgrimage was bound on the day following. Father Beaupommé was religiously impressed with devotion towards our Lady of Nestes or Nouilhan; and he entertained me, during a considerable portion of that beautiful afternoon, with an account of his own visit to the shrine, and expressed his gratification at learning that Catholics in other countries, especially in England, were about to be made acquainted with it through my instrumentality. As from the solitude of Garaison he dilated with enthusiasm on the graces and marvels of Nouilhan, he seemed to be in-

flamed by the interest and love of a brother for a younger sister; and my desire to visit Nouilhan was considerably increased by his description.

It was September, and the vast plain around Lannemezan was covered with the tents of twelve thousand soldiers. The Emperor was to be present in a few days; a grand review was to take place, and all the country round was ringing with the clang and tumult of a great camp. In effect, when the review did come off, it was witnessed by a crowd estimated to exceed one hundred thousand persons, and presented the most magnificent gathering of human beings upon one spot that the hoary Pyrenees had ever looked upon. I passed along the high road, which traversed the camp; and leaving behind me all the 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war,' was relieved by the prospect of a small but interesting valley, which displayed itself at the foot of a steep hill. In the distance, standing out from the great Pyrenean chain, rose an abrupt mamelon, on the summit of which might be seen the grey ruins of an ancient castle, whose lords once held sway over all that land. It was the Château of Montoussé, and at the base of this hill and castle stood the humble shrine of Nouilhan, whose modest spires were discernible through the foliage and sparkled as if in welcome through the sunblaze.

From the towers which surmount the dismantled walls of Montoussé the eye wanders over a glorious panorama. On one side may be seen the bold and barren peaks that bound the Val d'Aure; on the other extends the wild and monotonous plain of Capvern, at this period diversified by snowy tents and waving banners; while at the foot of the hill slumbers the valley of Nestes, fertilised by the silvery torrent from which it derives its name, and crowded with snug hamlets. In the distance, towards the north, Montrejeau, St. Gaudens, and the mountains of the Ariège may be dimly discerned; while, to the south, the forests of Gazau and of St. Arroman spread themselves out like a dark curtain before a brilliant saloon.

This valley, placed between Bagnères-de-Bigorre and

Bagnères-de-Luchon, possesses several traces of Roman occupation. Votive altars, dedicated to local divinities, have been frequently discovered, and many Christian churches and oratories are built on the sites of pagan temples. It is remarkable that, throughout the ancient diocese of Comminges, it was the habit to erect crosses upon the spots that had been consecrated to pagan worship, as if in homage to the triumph of Christianity over the departed superstition. Thus the chapel of our Lady of Nouilhan or Nestes is said to occupy the place of an ancient pagan oratory. Two altars, resembling those of the pagan rite, were discovered on the spot where the chapel now stands. M. Agos, the historian of our Lady of Nestes, inclines to think that these altars, as well as a tablet encrusted in the walls of the chapel, more properly belong to the early ages of Christianity. The tablet is a mortuary one, without any inscription, and exhibiting two doves picking at two bunches of grapes, on the side of a vase, which resembles a baptismal font. The doves are supposed to typify the soul, regenerated by baptism and nourished by the blood of Christ. On its lower angles are inscribed crosses in a circle. Similar emblems are found in most of the churches of Larboust, and may be remarked on that very curious *bénitier* in the church of St. Aventin, near Luchon.

The diocese of Comminges was especially consecrated to Mary; the cathedral at St. Bertrand was dedicated to her, and every town and valley had its own peculiar sanctuary. Indeed, this is the case throughout the entire of the Pyrenean chain and the adjacent plains.

The valley of the Nestes is highly fertile and thickly populated: a sparkling basin, round which the smaller hills, that form the advanced guard of the great mountains, intertwine themselves in a circle. In a quiet corner of this basin, almost at the foot of the ruins of Montoussé, stands the chapel of Our Lady of Nouilhan.* It

* *Nouilhan* is supposed to be derived from the word *nouillo*; which, in the patois of the country, signifies a heifer; and which apparently is derived from the Spanish word *novillo*. *Nestes* is the Celtic word for Gave, or stream.

looks as if placed at the entrance of the valley that it might ensure protection to it against the floods and hail-storms which are so prevalent in that region. The origin of this sanctuary is lost in antiquity; but tradition has invested it with its usual mystery, and has transmitted the circumstances of its foundation in the following history:—

The family of Corrège were among the most notable in the district, and possessors of numerous herds of cattle. Upon one occasion, as they returned from pasture in the evening, a heifer belonging to the lot was observed to separate herself from her companions, and, running in advance of them, stop before a large bush and bellow plaintively. This habit continued for some days, when the curiosity of the herdsman being aroused, he went to examine the cause of this strange proceeding. At first, he saw only briers and brambles; but, clearing away the bushes, he discovered a statue of the blessed Virgin lying in the middle of them. He had the statue carried respectfully to the parish church and deposited there. But on the next morning it had disappeared, and was again found in the bushes; again it was brought back to the church, and again during the night it mysteriously returned to the bush. This having occurred several times, the people understood that it was the desire of our Lady that a chapel should be built in her honour upon the spot where the statue had first been found. Accordingly rich and poor, great and small, combined in their efforts, and in a short time an oratory was erected upon the spot on which stands the church at the present day. There is a tradition that the precise site and plan of the chapel were indicated miraculously by a fall of snow in the middle of the summer heats, which covered a space of ground corresponding to the intended dimensions of the chapel. The same is told, but with more authenticity, of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome; which fact has been perpetuated in the Church by the institution of the Festival of our Lady of Nives—'In dedicatione Sanctæ Mariæ ad Nives.'

There cannot be any doubt as to the antiquity of the statue, which is believed to be the identical image that was found in the bushes. It represents the Virgin in a sitting posture, holding in her lap the infant Saviour, who has his hand extended, as if in the act of giving his benediction. The statue and the seat are formed of the same piece of wood; the type of the features is hard and commonplace. It is kept over the tabernacle on the high altar, and recently has been repainted and gilt. People came from great distances to contemplate and venerate a statue that had been obtained under such remarkable circumstances; devotion to our Lady of Nouilhan grew rapidly, and the oratory became established as one of the favoured pilgrimages of the valleys. Numerous gifts of land were made for its support, and a cemetery was established around the chapel, which became the burial-place of the arch-priests of the diocese, as well as of many families from other parishes, who piously desired that their last resting-place should be within the precincts of Our Lady of Nouilhan.

The principal festival was held on the Nativity of our Lady, when the throng of pilgrims that besieged the chapel showed that the *landes* of the Nestes were not less fervent in their devotion to Mary than the plains of Garaison or the hills of Héas. On one of these occasions it happened that a sudden flood had carried away the bridge over the Nestes, so that it became impossible for the pilgrims to cross; when a monk, who lived at Labarthe, moved by compassion at seeing so many people debarred from the object of their devotion, invoking our Lady of Nestes, plunged boldly into the torrent, and, lashing it with his girdle, opened a path through the waters, by which they were enabled to pass over in safety.

And thus many years of peaceful devotion passed away, leaving no chronicle of graces or of miracles beyond those which are recorded in the memories of the villagers and pilgrims, until the dismal era of the Revolution arrived. The remoteness and seclusion of Nouilhan could not save

it from the destruction which swept over all the holy places in France. Its shrine was desecrated and its altars stripped; its rich ornaments were carried away, its possessions confiscated, and its sanctuary abandoned. A succession of hail-storms occurred at this period, and during seven consecutive years desolated the country to an extent that was interpreted by the people as a scourge for the profanation of their church, and an indication of the anger of the outraged Madonna.

The miraculous image, however, was rescued from sacrilege in a singular manner. A devout woman, Madame de Berbisier of Arreau, heard that the statue had been taken to Labarthe, which is at a short distance from Nouilhan, and that the intention was to burn it as a relic of superstition; and being melted to tears at this possibility, she resolved to save it. For this purpose she sought out a person among her servants to whom she could entrust this mission, and such a person she found in John Malaplate, her bailiff ('garde de ses biens'). This courageous Christian undertook to accomplish the commands of his mistress, even if the execution of them should cost him his life. Madame de Berbisier furnished him with a silk dress, wrapped up in a napkin, as a parcel, to conceal the real object of his journey to Labarthe. This dress afterwards was given to the church, and converted into a vestment. Thus, unsuspected, he got access to the place where the statue lay unguarded, and succeeded in carrying it off wrapped up in the napkin, and bringing it in safety to Arreau. The statues of St. Agatha and St. Lucy also were saved by two other heroic men, Bertrand Reulet and Louis Vignaux, who concealed them between the slates and the ceiling of the church. The chronicler observes that such names and such acts, at a period when it was so perilous to declare religious faith, deserve to be commemorated; and I take pleasure in following his example.

When the tempest of the Revolution had cleared away, and religion once more could raise her head, the statue of

our Lady of Nouilhan was restored to light. Its ancient oratory was in ruins, and it was placed in the parish church; but the spot was no longer an object of pilgrimage, although it had never ceased to attract the devotion of the pious people of the neighbourhood, who preserved the tradition of its former celebrity. The invocation of our Lady of Nestes was known to bring relief to women in childbirth; young men liable to military service were exempted through her intervention; persons unjustly accused were enabled, on imploring her aid, unexpectedly to prove their innocence; and many sick persons were restored to health through her succour. During a plague which decimated the cattle of the district, it was observable that all those had escaped whose owners had made an offering to our Lady of Nestes.

Notwithstanding many miraculous interpositions of this nature, the abandoned sanctuary was not restored, and during more than fifty years the pious inhabitants mourned over its desolation. Solitude and silence prevailed in those places which formerly had resounded to the song of canticles; the brier and the bramble grew where the altar once had stood; the grass-grown nave was filled by the crumbling walls, and all hope of restoration seemed visionary, when an event took place through which its former glories were to be eclipsed.

On June 23, 1848, three little girls, from eight to twelve years of age, were playing near the fountain of Nouilhan, when they observed, under some bushes of white-thorn and holly, a statue, which resembled the miraculous image in the parish church. This figure seemed to be alive; it looked at them, and gently raised its arms to heaven. Their first thought, amounting to a conviction, was that they beheld the blessed Virgin, and from this belief they never subsequently altered or varied. They were interrogated separately by the curé four days after the vision, in presence of the catechism class, and they repeated the circumstances clearly, and each of them almost in the same words. The figure, they said, was as

tall as a little boy of their acquaintance, whom they named; it was clad with a white robe, and its face was very pale. Its hair, veiling half the forehead, was parted in the middle, and fell down at both sides. It touched the earth only with the tip of its feet, bent its shoulders gracefully, and looked up to heaven, with its mouth half open, as if in prayer. Such was the description of the vision given by one of the children, in which she was supported by that of her companions; and although subjected to much cross-examination, not only by their elders but by their playmates, they never varied in the slightest particular. During several days they continued to frequent the spot, hoping to see the vision again, and thus bring conviction of the truth of their story to those who were incredulous.

On the 27th of the same month some pious persons went to pray, after their day's labour, near the ruins of the old chapel. On the following day it occurred to them to repair to the place where the children averred that they had seen our Lady, and there they knelt down and prayed. About eleven o'clock, as they were reciting the last decade of the Rosary, the bush became agitated by a sudden sound; two little birds and a butterfly, disturbed from their rest, flew out of it and careered round about it. At the same instant they perceived a brilliant light in the middle of the bush, and the voice of the person, who was reciting the prayers aloud, suddenly faltered and stopped. She only could sigh and weep, crying out, 'La voilà!' ('There she is!') She had seen the blessed Virgin enveloped in that luminous aureole. Her companions rushed forward, but saw nothing. On the 29th, as they were about to retire, after having been a long time in prayer, the same persons heard the same sounds and beheld the same vision; and they further observed that the briers of the bush had been put aside, and formed a pavilion for the object upon which they were gazing.

This marvel was renewed upon the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and upon several subsequent occasions,

especially at the beginning of Lent and on the Feast of St. John the Baptist, in the following year. Sometimes the vision presented itself with a countenance all shining, at another time its hands were clasped, at another it bore an infant in its arms, at other times it had a crown on its head, and was accompanied by Saints Agatha and Lucy; while there exhaled from it a sweet odour as if of incense and flowers. The moaning of an infant frequently accompanied the apparition. Upon one occasion three drops of blood fell upon the spot where it was standing. Several persons endeavoured to approach the bush that they might examine it, and ascertain if any deception could be practised, but an invisible obstacle always prevented and withheld them.

These events were witnessed by many persons of credit and respectability, all of whom have affirmed them upon oath. A cross was planted on the spot where the apparition was seen, and an oratory erected, with the inscription

LIEU DE L'APPARITION : FONTAINE.

At foot of the altar in the oratory is a well, which sprung forth at the period of the apparition, and many miraculous cures are affirmed to have been wrought by drinking its waters.

It is not surprising that the minds of the people became moved and excited by these extraordinary occurrences, witnessed and attested by so many persons incapable of deceiving or being deceived, and thus their anxiety for the reconstruction of their old chapel and the restoration of the ancient image to its former altar became more and more intense. During the darkest days of the Revolution, an aged devotee, called Marie Corrège-Caussette, after having prayed for a long time, kneeling on the fragments of the deserted chapel, one evening cried out, 'The chapel will be rebuilt when people are no longer thinking about it; the saint who lies in the cemetery will be canonised as soon as her race becomes extinct, and

miracles will be worked.'* Men now recalled to mind this prediction, and looked out for its fulfilment. Encouraged by these recollections and events, the good people, unaided, commenced the work of restoration: all combined for that purpose; some gave their money, some their labour; the old stones were cleared away and contributed to the erection of the new edifice, which now stands upon the ancient site, the spot where the image of our Lady was first discovered by the heifer of M. Corrègê some centuries before.

Their pecuniary means for such an undertaking were small, but their devotion to Mary and their trust in God were great. There lived a pious, simple woman in the neighbourhood, who was moved by an irresistible inspiration to devote herself to this work. She sought contributions throughout the hills and the plains: no one refused her a mite, and in a short time a collection was realised sufficient to construct the small but beautiful chapel which now shelters our Lady of Nouilhan. This remarkable woman still lives. Her name is Katherine Malaplate, and she is probably a descendant of that John Malaplate whose courage was so instrumental in rescuing the statue from the hands of the revolutionary myrmidons. She is known in the district simply as 'KATHERINE,' and dwells with her uncle and brother in a comfortable farmhouse in the vicinity of the church. She is about thirty years of age, and is one of the three girls who, in 1848, had the privilege of beholding the apparition of our Lady at the bush. She has a placid, sensible countenance, and her mode of expression is thoughtful, clear, and full of conviction, although the mountain *patois* sometimes mingles with her French in a manner that is not agreeable to a foreign ear. She recounted to me the particulars which I have recorded on the very spot where they are affirmed to have taken place and to have been witnessed by her.

* 'Elle sera rebâtie un jour lorsqu'on n'y pensera plus; la sainte qui est dans le cimetière sera canonisée lorsque toute sa lignée sera éteinte; il y aura des miracles.'

'Quorum pars magna fui.' Before we left the fountain she proposed that we should recite together a pater and ave in the oratory, to gain the indulgences granted by our holy Father Pius IX., and she repeated the prayers slowly and with an accent of devotion that no frequency of repetition had impaired. To have responded to such prayers once in a life is a privilege ever after to be remembered.

On September 8, 1856, the church was finished, and the statue of the blessed Virgin was replaced on its old ground. It is needless to say that the people of the valley of the Nestes attended as one body, and their rejoicing was profound when they beheld the ancient object of the veneration of their fathers once more restored to the spot which Mary herself had selected, rescued by the courage of a pious lady and a faithful domestic from destruction, and given back to the care and the reverence of its favoured guardians. Since that happy day this pilgrimage has regained its popularity throughout the district, and the favours of Mary have been visibly distributed to those who have invoked her assistance at Nouilhan. I have seen no chapel in the Pyrenees more tasteful or elegant than this; it is kept with the greatest order and neatness, and in these respects resembles the oratory of a convent swept by the hands of holy nuns. Katherine is its sacristan and guardian; and, without soliciting, she is piously grateful for the smallest offering made to Mary's shrine. She took down the statue and placed it on the altar, that I might examine it in all its details, and then presented me with a medal, having on one side an exact representation of the image, with the legend, 'N.-D. de Nouilhan, P.P.N. 1856,' and on the obverse two hearts, with a crown over them, and the legend, 'A la gloire des sacrés cœurs de Jésus et de Marie.' The time at my disposal did not allow me to pay my respects to the curé of the parish, whose zeal and energy in promoting the restoration of the chapel form the theme of general praise throughout the canton.

It has been no part of my design to examine and discuss

the causes or object of these various apparitions. I feel my incompetence to enter upon so grave and mysterious a scrutiny, and restrict myself to the record of events which have been proved on the testimony of trustworthy witnesses upon evidence such as would be recorded as conclusive upon an important matter in a court of justice. I leave to my readers' intelligence and faith the explanation of motive for the supernatural, if indeed they are disposed to challenge the depths and the wisdom of the ways of God.

The first of these apparitions at Nouilhan occurred during the days of June 1848, at a time when the streets of the capital were flowing with blood, in which was mingled that of Monseigneur Affre, the martyr Archbishop of Paris;—a supreme crisis, in which religion seemed again about to veil its widowed head. Is it unworthy of pious credence that, at such a moment, the august patroness of France should show herself to her people to reanimate their faith and support their courage, and that she should have chosen to exhibit her compassion in a spot which formerly had been the scene of her predilection? This, at least, is the belief of Katherine Malaplate and her neighbours, as well as of a venerable ecclesiastic, whose opinion is justified by his good sense and erudition.

The Baron d'Agos mentions thirty-two authenticated miracles, which have been performed through the intercession of our Lady of Nouilhan, within recent years. He describes one of which he himself personally was cognizant. During one of the May demonstrations, a young man was wounded by a bullet in the side while standing at his doorway. He was taken to the house of M. Agos, and remained for several days in a very critical condition. His life was despaired of, the doctor declared his case hopeless, and the last Sacraments were administered to him. In this state M. Agos, touched by the grief of a widowed mother in apprehension of the loss of an only son, fervently invoked the aid of our Lady of Nouilhan, and vowed to present a crown to her sanctuary if the young

man should recover. The physician had left him, saying he would not return; but no sooner had M. Agos terminated his prayer than a sudden crisis seemed to take place in the patient, and he instantaneously recovered. M. Sajous, the sacristan at Garaison, narrates that, in the month of July 1857, he was very ill and weak, having been attacked by a disease in the stomach, which brought him to death's door. On the evening of the 25th, while at prayer, his mind turned to our Lady of Nouilhan, of which place he was a native, and he recommended himself earnestly to her intercession. He had scarcely done so, when he found a change come over him, his malady disappeared, and he went forth cured and rejoicing. I had the gratification, eleven years later, to see and converse with Brother Sajous, still the sacristan at Garaison; and he repeated and confirmed the foregoing facts to me. Bertrande Verdies of Labarthe, who is still alive, was piteously afflicted by a cancer in her hand. The disease had made great progress, the flesh and the bones were eaten away, and the suffering was intolerable. An officer of health and the doctor in attendance on her had frequently told her children that art was powerless in her case, and that nothing could save her but amputation or a miracle. The patient, however, full of confidence in our Lady of Nouilhan—for Nouilhan is only a short distance from Labarthe—caused her friends to bring her some water from the fountain of the Apparition, in which she washed the sore, whereupon the pain ceased, the flesh closed up and assumed its natural colour, the wound healed, the cancer entirely disappeared, and has never since returned. Anne Bazerque, of St. Arroman, was reduced to the last extremity, but recovered on having had a Mass said for her at the chapel and a medal of our Lady of Nouilhan placed round her neck.

There is a brief of Innocent X. extant, which grants numerous indulgences to the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Nouilhan. Among other privileges, it grants an indulgence to any member who should entertain

a poor person in his house; who should reconcile enemies, bring about peace, convert a sinner, or instruct the ignorant in the law of God.

Notre-Dame du Nestes, or Nouilhan, as I have preferred to call it, is situated near the village of Labarthe, at five kilomètres from Lannemezan, on the road to Arreau. When I left it, I recrossed the camp, and took

UN SERVITEUR DE MARIE

DEVANT LES RUINES DE NOTRE-DAME DU NESTÉS.

Dans cette aimable solitude,
La Vierge Marie, autrefois,
De bénir faisant son étude,
Pour son autel fixa le choix.
Mais qu'est-ce? O ma patrie,
Tu veux donc désormais
Du culte de Marie
Proscrire les bienfaits!
Descendez et voyez nos regrets, Vierge sainte,
Descendez, revenez embellir cette enceinte,
Hélas, hélas, oubliez nos erreurs
Et recevez l'hommage de nos cœurs.

Quel est donc le nouveau vandale
Qui spolia cette maison!
Vous qui souffrez un tel scandale,
Sept ans vous perdrez la moisson!
Vous vouliez, bonne Mère,
Être avec vos enfants;
Vous voyez la misère,
Et les malheurs des temps.
Descendez, etc.

Elle reçut ici l'hommage
De nos aïeux reconnaissants
Qui va, remontant d'âge en âge,
Se perdre dans la nuit des temps.
Quoi! le lieu de prières,
L'orgueil de ces forêts,
Tout couvert de bruyères!
Hélas! ô temps mauvais!
Descendez, etc.

the train at Lannemezan, where I found myself at the side of a dear and cherished relative, whose long-looked for presence lighted up my heart with a warmth of human love, that would not have been reproved by Her in whose sanctuary I had so recently knelt and prayed for his dear welfare.

A SERVANT OF MARY

BEFORE THE RUINS OF OUR LADY OF NESTES.

In this delicious solitude,
The Virgin Mary full of grace,
Studying to bless the multitude,
Hath fixed her altar's chosen place.
But what is this? My native land,
Dost thou her benefits despise?
Proscribe her worship? and remand
Her votaries to other skies?
Descend, and look down on our grief, holy Maid,
Restore your fair fane, for long ages decayed:
Alas! and alas! our sins and our errors forgive,
And accept the best homage our hearts' vows can give!

Say, what new Vandal from afar
Hath made your house his ruthless spoil?
For such a scandal, worse than war,
Seven years of dearth shall scourge your soil!
Still would you wish, good Mother mild,
To shield your children with your care;
You know their misery, and how wild
And terrible the dark times are!

And here it was our fathers old,
In ages lost in Time's swift flight,
To Her their loving homage told,
In grateful words of pure delight.
And is it then this placë of prayer,
The branching forest's honoured pride,
Oh! evil days! to be laid bare,
And brambles cover every side!

Dans la demeure de la Mère
Se plaît le divin cœur du Fils.
De cet auguste sanctuaire
Que de faveurs pour le pays ?
O salut de la France,
Vous fuyez loin de nous !
Chargés de notre offense,
Que ferons-nous sans vous ?
Descendez, etc.

Elle est partie, notre Reine,
Cette reine pleine d'appas.
O mon aimable souveraine,
Je veux m'attacher à vos pas.
Au jour de votre fête,
Les yeux baignés de pleurs,
Je ceindrai votre tête
De couronnes de fleurs.
Descendez, etc.

Bétharram brave la tempête,
Garaison est resplendissant,
De Buglose voyez la fête ;
Portez vos regards en avant :
Du couchant à l'aurore
Des temples élevés !
Pourquoi faut-il encore
Des autels renversés ?
Descendez, etc.

Le Ciel par d'étonnants miracles
Ne protesta-t-il pas toujours ?
Qu'est-il besoin d'autres oracles ?
Allons, comptons sur son secours.
A l'œuvre donc, nos frères !
Non, non, plus de retard ;
La meilleure des mères
L'attend de votre part.

Désormais, dans ce temple, à Jésus, à Marie,
Je consacre mon cœur, mon esprit et ma vie.
Oh ! puissé-je du pied de cet autel
Avec ma Mère m'envoler au ciel !

The heart divine of Mary's Son,
His Mother's temple fills with blessing!
What favours hath this country won,
Her sanctuary august possessing!
Alas! for France, in every sense,
If thou, her guide, afar doth fly;
Deep laden with our grave offence,
Without thee, who will heed our cry!

Oh! she is gone, our sovereign fair,
So full of gentleness and love.
To Her, my Queen, in silent prayer
I'll cling, where'er her footsteps move.
And on her days of festival
The tears my weeping sight shall drown,
And her dear head with coronal
Of fragrant flowers I'll fondly crown!

Bétharram braves the tempest loud;
Garaison radiant shines again;
Lone Buglose hails the pilgrim crowd,
And hymns resound o'er hill and plain.
From west to east new temples rise,
Where'er th' expanding view can turn;
And surely never more our eyes
O'er altars fallen shall sadly mourn!

Doth not high Heaven, by miracle,
Each day proclaim its great protest?
What need we other oracle
To wake up hope in every breast?
On to the work, my brethren true,
No longer tarry in your toil,
The best of Mothers watches you,
Longing to glad you with her smile!
Henceforth in this temple my life I surrender;
To Jesus and Mary my spirit I tender;
From the foot of this altar to me be it given
To take my last flight, with my Mother, to Heaven!

D. S. L.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

(Val de Lavédan.)

'Ses mains jointes sur la poitrine se séparèrent selon les bras étendus à droite et à gauche, et elles se croisèrent ensuite sur le cœur. . . . Elle dit: "Je suis l'Immaculée Conception." '—Bernadette, *Relations.*

'En présence de l'intéressante procession de visiteurs, de pèlerins, d'hommes, de femmes, de peuples entiers, qui viennent aujourd'hui de tous côtés s'agenouiller devant une grotte déserte, entièrement ignorée il y a dix ans, et que la parole d'une enfant a fait tout-à-coup considérer comme un Sanctuaire divin; en voyant s'élever le vaste édifice que la foi populaire élève en cet endroit, et qui contera près de deux millions, j'ai éprouvé le besoin, non-seulement de rechercher les preuves du fait surnaturel mais encore d'examiner comment la croyance s'en était universellement répandue.'—M. Lasserre, *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, p. 1.

It is not far from Bétharram to Lourdes, if considered only as to distance, but if regarded through time and history they are separated by ages. While the power of steam has drawn them nearer, that of religion has brought them still more together by an attraction which is regulated neither by time nor by space. And thus, having commenced our pilgrimage in the early year at ancient Bétharram, we find ourselves kneeling, at its conclusion, before the marvellous grotto of modern Lourdes. Through many a sacred pathway, by the rushing stream, beneath the lofty mountain and the freezing glacier, we have borne the heat of the day and gathered the dust of the road, following the penitential footsteps of many a former wayfarer; and we have mingled our orisons in loving supplication at many a sacred shrine with those of the pilgrim brothers who have preceded us. It has been our valued privilege to present our humble homage at most of the numerous sanctuaries that bear testimony to the

devotion with which our Lady has always been regarded in the lovely valleys of the Pyrenees; and we trust that most of our readers have accompanied us faithfully, and not turned back affrighted at the length of the journey or disheartened by the dullness of the guide. With those who have been our unwearied companions we approach, in lowliness and lovingness, that spot which has been distinguished the most recently by the presence of MARY; and we hope to inspire them, through her aid, with the same spirit of faith and reverence which we have imbibed during our visits to the rocks of Massabielle.

The city of Lourdes is situated in the Upper Pyrenees, at the opening of the seven valleys that constitute the Lavedan, between the undulating hills which terminate the plain of Tarbes and the first declivities of the abrupt Pic-de-Gers. The houses, placed irregularly on an uneven platform, are grouped without order at the base of a large rock, which stands separated from everything around; and on the top of which is perched, like the nest of an eagle, a formidable fortress. At the western side of the town and at foot of this rock, under the shade of elder, ash, and poplar trees, the Gave runs rapidly, dashing its turbulent waters over a bar of flinty stones, and in its course setting at work the wheels of several mills. This river is formed by the different streams of the higher valleys, which issue from the inexhaustible glaciers that repose in virginal whiteness on the flanks of the Haute Montagne. The principal of these streams flows from the cascade of Gavarnie, which, as I have described already, precipitates itself down one of those mighty *pics* which human foot has not yet invaded.

The scenery on the banks of the Gave in the environs of Lourdes is soft and pretty—green meadows, cultivated fields, thick woods, bare rocks, constitute its ornaments. To the north are fertile plains, while to the south rise up mighty mountains and snow-clad peaks. The view from the railway station at Lourdes is striking, embracing, on one side, the frowning fort with the picturesque

town crouching timidly at its foot, and on the other, as if melting into clouds in the distance, the eternal hills.

The fortress of Lourdes, which previous to the use of artillery was impregnable, had long been looked upon as the key of the Pyrenees. History relates that Charlemagne, during his war with the Saracens, besieged it; and, in despair of becoming master of it, was about to withdraw his troops, when an eagle, flying over the highest tower of the castle, dropped a large fish over the battlement, which to this day is called *Pierre de l'Aigle.* Thereupon the Moorish commandant, Mirat, sent an envoy to Charlemagne to say that he might now understand how vain was the expectation to reduce his garrison by famine, as his fish-pond supplied them with excellent food. This incident confirmed the Emperor in his intention of raising the siege, until the Bishop of Puy, interpreting the omen differently, assured him that our Lady of Puy was about to operate in his favour, and that he should not be discouraged. The Emperor thereupon commissioned the bishop as his ambassador and the servant of our Lady 'Dame Sainte Marie,' to negotiate with Mirat. He succeeded in convincing the Moor that the relief brought to him by the eagle was accidental and temporary, and, addressing him with energy, said: 'Mirat, since you are unwilling to surrender to Charles the Great, the most illustrious mortal of all the universe, since you are unwilling to acknowledge a master, recognise at least a mistress, surrender to the most noble Lady that ever was, the Mother of God, holy Mary of Puy. I am her servant; become her knight.'

And Mirat replied (enlightened, the chronicle tells us, by grace from above): 'I give up my arms, and surrender myself and all that belongs to me to the Mother of the Lord, to holy Mary of Puy. I consent in her honour to become a Christian and her knight; but I mean to engage myself freely of my own accord, and desire that my suzerainty shall be derived from her alone, both for myself and my descendants.' The bishop then took up a handful

of hay from the meadow on which they were standing, and added: 'Assuredly you wish to offer something in sign of homage to the Mother of God? Offer to her at least this bit of grass, to show that you have become her vassal.' And then Mirat and all his soldiers, putting wisps of hay round the points of their lances, in sign of submission, surrendered themselves at the feet of blessed Mary of Puy. This happened in the year 778.

During the middle ages the Castle of Lourdes was a centre of terror to the surrounding country. At one time under the name of the English, at another under that of the Counts of Bigorre, it was occupied by hordes of brigands, who made war upon the undefended inhabitants of the plains, seized upon their persons, and required large sums for their ransom. In the eighteenth century it was converted into a state prison, and became the Bastille of the south-western districts. Since the Restoration and the Empire it has served as barrack for a small garrison, and thus retains in diminished strength something of its ancient character. Although it has lost its feudal terrors, it preserves its feudal picturesqueness. It is still the key of the Pyrenees, but no longer in a military sense. It is the highway to the Pyrenean watering-places, Barèges, Saint-Sauveur, Cauterets, Bagnères-de-Bigorre, Bagnères-de-Luchon; and the railway from Pau to Toulouse passes by it. For many years it was known merely as the entrance to the mountains, possessing nothing beyond its fortress to delay the traveller on his journey, until a supernatural event occurred to give it an importance and celebrity which have placed it among the most frequented sanctuaries that the Divine goodness has miraculously illustrated.

The people of Lourdes, whose blood has not been altered by foreign mixtures, are naturally good and religious, and gifted with that plain common sense which so frequently belongs to mountaineers. There are few places in France where the schools are better attended. There is not a boy who does not go to the Christian Brothers' or some lay school; nor a girl who does not frequent the schools

of the Sisters of Nevers, until they have completed such education as befits their position in life. Better educated than the working-class of most towns, they still preserve their simplicity of manners and earnestness of faith. Their blood is warm, their heads hot, their hearts true, and their morality unimpeachable: they are honest, religious, and in nowise prone to novelties.

'Almost the entire population,' writes M. de Lagrèze, in his 'Chronique de la ville et du château de Lourdes,' 'belong to some pious confraternity. The workmen, united under the name of brothers, place their trade under the Divine protection, and reciprocate Christian relief and temporal assistance. A common box receives a weekly offering from each workman, while in health, to be repaid when he is in sickness or poverty, or at his death, when his funeral expenses are discharged, and his remains conveyed by his *confrères* to their last home. Each confraternity has a chapel of its own in the church, from which it takes its name, and which it supports by a small collection on Sundays. The confraternity of Notre-Dame des Grâces is composed of labourers; that of Notre-Dame du Mont Carmel of slaters; that of Notre-Dame de Monserrat of masons; that of St. Anne of joiners; that of St. Lucy of dressmakers; that of the Ascension of stone-cutters; that of the Blessed Sacrament of the church-wardens; those of St. John and St. James of all those who have received those names in baptism.'

The women also have their religious associations. One of these, 'La Congrégation des Enfants de Marie,' has a very especial character. To gain admission to this 'congregation' it is essential to have exhibited unvarying steadiness of conduct. The congregationist enters into an engagement to avoid every occasion of evil, such as frequenting worldly *fêtes*, through which the spirit of religion is so often lost; not to adopt eccentric fashions of dress, and to be exact in attendance at their spiritual reunions and at Sunday instructions. The good which this association has effected is incalculable, as may be seen in the excellent young women—wives and mothers

—which it has produced. This association likewise has its box for weekly subscriptions and mutual assistance. Throughout this country devotion to our blessed Lady at all times has been universally cultivated. This book has shown how numerous are her sanctuaries from Sarrance to Garaison; and at Lourdes, in the old parish church, all the altars are dedicated to the Virgin.

My readers will remember that I have described the city and fortress as situated on the right bank of the Gave, which, after washing in its course from the south the base of the enormous rock on which it stands, sharply turns at a right angle and flows to the west. A quaint old bridge, crossing the river some distance above the town, opens a communication with the country on the left bank. Between the bridge and the castle a tolerably large canal has its origin on the left bank of the Gave. It rejoins the river at the distance of a kilomètre down, a little below the rocks of *Massabielle*, the base of which it washes. Before reuniting with the Gave, and after turning the mill of Sâvy, it is increased by the waters of a small rivulet called the *Merlasse*. The long island formed by the Gave and the canal presents a pleasant green meadow, and is known as *L'Ile du Châlet*, or, more commonly, *Le Châlet*. The mill of Sâvy, which is the only one on the left bank, is built across the canal, and serves as a bridge between the island meadow and the main land.

In 1858 there was scarcely a wilder or more lonely spot in the neighbourhood of the busy little town I have described than the rocks, at the foot of which the canal rejoined the river. At a few paces above this junction, on the bank of the rivulet, the abrupt rock was pierced at its base by three irregular excavations, curiously superimposed, and communicating with one another, like holes in a sponge. The singularity of these excavations renders them difficult to describe. The first and largest was on the level of the ground. It was in shape not unlike the half of a domed oven cut through the centre, so as to form only a semi-dome. The entrance, in the form of a

large arc of a circle, was about thirteen feet high; its breadth was about three times its height. The rock sloped back from the entrance, and the hollow contracted as it went in. As in all excavations of the kind in limestone, the rock was perfectly dry in ordinary weather, but damp during rain. Even this occasional moisture was to be seen only on one side, the right as one enters, being that from which the rain, driven by the west winds, usually comes. Naturally it penetrates the thin rock, as it would the wall of a house under similar circumstances. The left side and top of the grotto, not being so exposed, were perfectly dry at all times.

Above this first cavity, to the spectator's right, were two superimposed openings in the rock, forming, as it were, annexes or dependencies of the larger one. Viewed from the outside, the principal of these openings, divided from the lower grotto by a thin shelf of rock, was oval in form and about the size of a window in a house or a niche in a church. It sloped slightly up as it receded; then, at the depth of about six feet, forked; one branch descending to the grotto beneath, the other turning back on itself, and forming on the face of the rock the second superior opening, of which I spoke just now. This was of no importance, except that it gave light in every direction to all the supplementary cavity. All these passages were large enough for a man to pass through erect. A wild rose-tree, springing from the crevice of the rock, spread its branches at foot of the niche-like opening, in which lay—how brought there no one knew—an enormous block of granite: remarkable, as the rocks which I have so minutely described are limestone. In front of this collection of excavations, very simple when seen, but very hard to describe, the mill-stream flows across a chaos of huge rocks, fallen from the mountains, to reunite with the Gave at five or six paces below.

The grotto was in front of the lower part of the Ile du Châlet, and was called *La Grotte de Massabielle*, which, in the patois of the country, signifies old rocks. Lower

down the Gave there was a steep and rugged hill, which, as well as these rocks, belonged to the commune of Lourdes, and where the poor of the town used to send their pigs to feed. When the weather was bad, it was their habit to take shelter in the grotto, as was the custom also of the fishermen who cast their nets into the river at this place. Above the triple cavity arose, like a peak, the huge mass of the Massabielle rocks, festooned by wild box and ivy, wild fern and moss. Entangled briers, hazel, and rose-bushes extended their roots into the fissures of the rocks and flourished wherever the breath of the wind had wafted a handful of earth for their nourishment. Such was the spot ten years ago, destined to become celebrated wherever the name of 'Mary Immaculate' is known and honoured, and which it has been necessary to describe in some detail, in order that my readers may fully comprehend the wondrous story that is to follow.

Marie-Bernarde Soubirous, of Lourdes, familiarly called BERNADETTE, was, in 1858, a little girl of fourteen years of age, remarkable only for the smallness of her person. Her family were poor, and lived by their labour, being often in great indigence. Bernadette was a miserable little creature from her birth; at the time we speak of she was still lank, small, and sickly, and she had been afflicted by asthma from her cradle. She had been nursed in the neighbouring parish of Bartrés, and the greater part of her infancy had been spent on the quiet hills of that district, tending a small flock of sheep. She was much beloved by her foster-parents, and her great delight was to play with a favourite lamb. 'There is one among all my lambs,' she said one day, 'that I love the most, and that is the smallest.' She herself among her playmates was like that little lamb which she loved best, feeble and small. There was nothing in Bernadette very different from other poor children. She had never been sent to school, contrary to the usual practice of the place, was consequently very ignorant, and the only prayer-book she could read was her beads. Her intelligence was scarcely that of

ordinary capacity, and the vivacity natural to youth was curbed in her by delicacy of the chest, from which she constantly suffered. And yet this fragile child possessed in her simple heart a treasure that God loved. Artless, obedient, and affectionate, she knew no falsehood. Her countenance and manner of speaking, although vulgar, were agreeable, and impressed her hearers by their gentleness with interest and even with respect.

At fourteen years of age she had not yet made her first Communion; but her soul seemed still to preserve its baptismal innocence unsullied. All holy things possessed inexpressible charms for her, and she had such a horror of evil that her pain was visible whenever anything bad happened to be done or said in her presence. Her sister, three years younger, relates with tenderness that Bernadette was wont to chide her for her lukewarmness in prayer, for rudeness of manners, or forward behaviour. This younger sister had much more vigour, and when provoked by Bernadette's reproofs, would often enlist her little brother on her side, and together attack the eldest, who sometimes would shed tears, but never make any complaint to their parents. After her return from Bartrés she used to say night prayers aloud for the family, which she never would commence until everyone was present. Her attitude of prayer was full of recollection; she never leaned against a chair nor exhibited the slightest indication of distraction or weariness. This simple child prayed with edifying devotion, notwithstanding her book-ignorance; indeed she loved prayer, especially that prayer of the unlettered—the rosary. She would often address herself, with her beads, to the blessed Virgin Mary, of whom she had little more than an intuitive knowledge; but the holy Mother of Bethlehem loved Bernadette, and watched over her, while she grew up in humility and piety. The Curé of Bartrés met her one day minding her sheep, just before her return to her family, and his soul was moved by her expressions of innocence and purity. He saluted her respectfully, and said: 'The children to

whom the blessed Virgin appeared at La Salette must have resembled this little one;' never dreaming how prophetic was his observation.

On February 11, 1858, in the middle of a cold day, Bernadette, with her younger sister Marie and a companion called Jeanne, were scrambling along the banks of the Gave, near the rocks of Massabielle, in search of wood for firing. Clothed in an old black dress, worn and darned, her delicate face muffled in her small white *capulet*, which, covering her head, fell over her shoulders, her feet enveloped in thick heavy *sabots*, she had an air of rustic gracefulness which charmed the heart rather than the eye. Describing her appearance upon this occasion, an accomplished writer observes that she was adorned by that which is the greatest as it is the rarest thing in the world—the majesty of innocence ('la plus grande et la plus rare chose que soit en ce monde—la majesté de l'innocence').

The canal, which supplies the water to turn the mill, at that period passed round the rock, and as the Gave was then low, there was visible a small bank of sand and stones between the two currents. When at the end of the meadow, Bernadette said to her companions, 'Let us go over the stones and see where it is the canal finishes.' Accordingly along they went until they arrived in front of the grotto. Marie and Jeanne hastened to take off their stockings that they might cross, but Bernadette hesitated, saying:

'I dare not put my feet into the water, on account of my cough.'

'Do you remain there,' replied Marie, authoritatively, 'and we will go over and finish our work alone.'

The two girls put their stockings and *sabots* in their aprons, and taking their bundle of sticks under their arms, stepped into the canal.

As they stepped into the water they shrieked out from the pain caused by its icy coldness. When it came to Bernadette's turn to pass, her sister offered to take her

across upon her back; but she declined, saying she was not strong enough; but asked her companion, who was more robust, to help her over, which she refused with an oath that is common among the lower people. Bernadette reprimanded her severely, and counselled her sister not to keep company any more with a person who offended God by swearing. At last, determined not to be left behind, she stooped down to take off her stockings, and cross over herself. While thus occupied she heard the sudden rushing of wind, and thought that a storm had overtaken them. But, to her surprise, there was no movement in the long poplars, and the leaves of the trees were perfectly still. Again she proceeded to take off her stockings, and again she heard the rush of the wind, and looking towards the grotto, she perceived the rose-tree bending its leafless branches to the ground.

At that instant the niche in the grotto became resplendent with light, and a Lady of incomparable beauty, with her feet reposing on the rose-tree, stood before her and saluted her. Her arms hung down at her side, her head was slightly bent, and she smiled graciously. A blue girdle, loosely knotted round the body, hung in front in two long bands, which nearly touched the feet. Behind, a white veil, enveloping the shoulders and arms and fastened on the head, descended to the bottom of her dress. On her left wrist was suspended a rosary, of which the beads were white as purest crystal and the chain yellow as virgin gold. Bernadette, overwhelmed, rubbed her eyes, and instinctively took her own beads out of her pocket, and, as if for protection, signed her forehead with them. But her arm fell powerless by her side, and she could not raise it. A sentiment of vague disquietude took possession of her, when the Vision, with her right hand, took the cross of the rosary, which hung on her own wrist, made the sign of redemption with it, and with a smile of ineffable benignity intimated to the child to do the same with hers. Thereupon her arm regained its power, the Lady passed her fingers over her own beads, and Bernadette recited the

Rosary. From that time forward the manner in which Bernadette made the sign of the cross attracted the remark of all beholders; and a pious person observed that if the sign of the cross is made by the saints in heaven, it must be like that made by Bernadette when in ecstasy.

My readers will be pleased to read the eloquent description given of this scene by M. Henri Lasserre, who received it from the lips of Bernadette herself. 'The Lady was of middle height. She seemed to be quite young, and had all the gracefulness of twenty years of age; but without losing any of its delicate tenderness, that brilliancy of youth, which is so fugitive, with her had a stamp of eternity. The separate and successive characters of the four seasons of life seemed to be combined in her features without disturbing their exquisite harmony. The innocent candour of childhood, the perfect purity of maidenhood, the tender gravity of maternity were expressed on the youthful countenance of that marvellous Vision. How shall we find a comparison, in the things of this fallen world, where the rays of the beautiful are so scattered, broken, and dimmed, that they never shine upon us unless through some impure shadow? All comparison could only do injury to that ineffable type. No earthly majesty, no worldly distinction, no lowly simplicity, could convey any just idea, or enable us to comprehend the beauty of that Vision. It is not with the lanterns of earth that one can illuminate the stars of heaven!' ('Ce n'est point avec les lampes de la terre qu'on peut faire voir, et pour ainsi dire, éclairer les astres du ciel.') *

Bernadette's sister was struck by her attitude, and remarking the movement of her lips and the fixity of her gaze, she said to their companion: 'See! Bernadette is praying.'

'Oh! the holy one' ('la dévote'), she replied; 'what an idea to come here to pray! Why does she not keep her prayers for the church?'

* *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, par Henri Lasserre, p. 27. (1869.)

'Let us leave her to herself,' rejoined the sister, 'she can do nothing except say her prayers;' and they began to run about to warm their feet. In the meantime the Vision made a sign with her finger to Bernadette to approach, but she dared not move towards her. At last the Lady stretched out her arms, bent gently, smiled a farewell, and the rock became cold, the rose-bush deserted, and the niche empty again. When Bernadette got up she took off her stockings, and boldly stepped into the water, which previously she had feared to do on account of her cold. She exclaimed with surprise to her companions:

'Oh! what fibs you have been telling' ('menteuses que vous êtes'); 'you said that the water was cold, and I find it quite nice and warm.'

'Yes, indeed, warm!—the Gave warm in winter!' replied the children.

'Yes,' she replied, 'I tell you that I find it soft and warm as the water for scalding the vessels;' and her sister, who complained that her own feet were swollen from the cold, stooped down to feel those of Bernadette, and she found them quite warm.

After a short silence, Bernadette said to her companions:

'Didn't you see anything up there?'

'No! What did you see?'

Then, after some hesitation, whether it was that she feared to expose that bright vision to profanation by ridicule, or that she was restrained by her natural timidity, she said:

'Then I did not either.' ('Alors moi, non plus.')

They returned homewards, and Bernadette felt herself sufficiently strong to relieve her sister in carrying her bundle of sticks; and as they were going along, she began again, and said to her:

'I wish to tell you something, but you must not let father or mother know, as they might scold me. You know that time that I was on my knees; I saw in the hole of the rock a beautiful Lady, wearing a white dress, with

a blue girdle, and she had her beads, and there was a great brightness about her.'

'You are an idiot,' replied the sister; 'how could you ever have seen such a thing up there?'

'But I did though, my dear: only don't mention it.'

'To see a white Lady up there in that dark hole and wild place! Oh! wouldn't I be afraid! and weren't you frightened?'

'No,' she said, 'she was so beautiful.'

Marie and Jeanne no longer doubted. The soul of innocent childhood readily believes, and scepticism is not a vice that belongs to girlhood. However, they were terrified, and thinking that the vision might have been that of some evil spirit, they determined not to return there again lest something bad might befall them.

No sooner had they got home than Marie told her mother. The good woman shrugged her shoulders, said Bernadette must have been dreaming, and should not repeat such nonsense. But she persisted, and recounted the vision to her mother, who concluded by forbidding her to return to the grotto any more. This prohibition much disturbed poor Bernadette, so that, when saying night prayers as usual, she found it impossible to pronounce the words, 'Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us!' but, stopping, began to cry and sob aloud. The vision of the grotto was before her mind's eye, and the recollection of her mother's prohibition stifled her with grief, so that she could not utter a word. Her sleep was disturbed, and on the next day she could not eat. The consistency and preciseness of her account, together with the effect upon the child's temperament, had much impressed her mother, who communicated the story to her neighbours, and it rapidly got circulation.

Bernadette's mind was filled with the remembrance of the beautiful Lady; and an ardent desire to behold her again had taken passionate possession of her. But the prohibition of her mother to return to the grotto seemed to present an insuperable barrier to the gratification of

her heart's desire, for she was above all a child of obedience. However, on Sunday, February 14, her companions became so urgent on the subject, that Madame Soubirous was induced to change her mind; and they all started for Massabielle, the heart of Bernadette bounding at the chance of again seeing the lovely Lady. The little party, at her suggestion, made a visit to the church at Lourdes, and having said some prayers, went upon their way rejoicing. The other children, who were better instructed in their catechism than Bernadette, suggested to her to take some holy water with her, because, they said, if the vision is from the devil it will vanish when sprinkled with holy water; but if from God it will remain. On their arrival at the grotto, Bernadette proposed that they should say the Rosary ('Prions et récitons le chapelet'), and they all knelt down, with a number of other girls who had joined them on the road.

Shortly the appearance of Bernadette became transfigured; her face was filled with emotion, and emitted a light that seemed divine.

'She is there!' she cried out with mingled accents of joy and terror; 'see her!' And she stretched out her little hands towards the rose-tree. The feet of the Apparition rested upon the rock, and she was clothed as upon the former occasion.

The other children saw nothing but the bare rock and the naked rose-bush, and they cried out: 'We see nothing. You are a silly creature.'

Bernadette then took from her pocket her phial of holy water, and sprinkled it in the direction of the Vision, saying: 'If you belong to God, come near; but if you are from the devil, begone!'—words which she had been taught for the purpose. In a tone of languor, penetrated with wonder and tenderness, she asked her companions again if they too did not see Her, and described to them her various attitudes:

'But she is there; she is looking at us; she smiles; now she is turning her head; look at her feet, her toes;

her girdle flies about; see, she has her rosary round her arm. Oh! how beautiful she is. She has a little face, which looks like wax. Now she has taken her beads, she is crossing herself.'* And Bernadette again became silent.

On her knees, her hands clasped, her beads between her fingers, her body drawn upwards as if by invisible force, her countenance pallid, her lips discoloured, her eyes uplifted and motionless, she seemed the statue of a saint in ecstasy. Her companions at last grew alarmed, and said to each other: 'Is she going to die?' They pinched her and used every effort to arouse her, but she remained insensible to all their attempts. They sent for her mother and other friends, all of whom witnessed Bernadette's abstraction and were struck by the celestial expression which irradiated her entire countenance. At length the Vision disappeared, and Bernadette regained her usual condition. Her mother grew alarmed at this incident, and, fearing the consequences, told her that her extraordinary conduct would bring them under the eyes of the police, and probably cause them to be sent to prison. This occurrence caused much conjecture and questioning among the neighbours; but her answers were always precise and clear. Her ignorance on general things, her complete simplicity, and yet her tone of certitude in describing the Apparition, impressed everyone that heard her, and convinced them that there was something supernatural in the matter. Many people thought it must be a suffering soul from Purgatory, that had been permitted to seek for Masses for its relief. 'Ask the Lady,' they said, 'who she is, what she desires, and get her to write it down, so that you may not forget it.'

Accompanied by two ladies of the congregation, Antoinette Peyret and Madame Millet, she returned to the grotto for the third time on Thursday, February 18. Ma-

* '. . . mais elle est là, elle nous regarde . . . elle sourit; maintenant elle tourne la tête; voyez ses pieds, les doigts de ses pieds; sa ceinture vole; voyez, elle a le chapelet roulé autour de son bras. Oh! elle est si belle! Elle a une petite figure qui semble de cire. A présent elle prend son chapelet, elle se signe.'—*Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, 6me livraison, p. 87.

dame Millet severely cautioned Bernadette against any attempt at imposition. When they reached the heights of Massabielle, Bernadette proceeded so rapidly that her companions found it difficult to keep pace with her; and when she arrived at the grotto, she exclaimed:

'Look, she is there!'

'Take care, little girl,' said Madame Millet in a menacing tone, 'what you say; if you pretend to see something that you do not see, woe betide you!'*

'Oh! she is there,' replied the child; 'look at her!'†

Upon this the two ladies knelt down at the side of the child, and lighting a blessed taper, which they had brought with them, placed it before the grotto. And this was the inauguration of that sanctuary, which has glowed with the multitudinous lights of innumerable votaries, and which from a lonely savage solitude has become one of the most renowned and frequented shrines in Christendom. It was early morning, and the roseate dawn had kindled the mountain peaks with the first radiance of day, when this humble lamp was first lighted, to burn in enduring homage for many a distant age to come!

'Go up to her,' said these ladies; 'ask her her name and condition, why she comes, if she is a soul from Purgatory that wants Masses. Ask her to write down what she wants, and tell her that it shall be done.'

Bernadette took the pen, ink, and paper, and advanced towards the Apparition; but at each step that she made the Vision retired before her, until it gained the niche in the grotto. Her companions at first followed Bernadette, but she motioned to them to remain behind.

'Ma Dame,' said the child, 'if you have anything to communicate to me, will you have the goodness to write it down here?'

But the mysterious Lady smiled and said: 'There is no need of writing that which I have to tell you; it is to ask

* 'Écoute, filleule; si tu dis que tu vois quelque chose sans rien voir, gare à toi!'

† 'Oh! elle y est, la voilà!'

you to do me the favour to come here during fifteen days' ('faites-moi la grâce de venir pendant quinze jours').

She promised, and the Vision added: 'I cannot make you happy in this world, but I engage to do so in the next.' After a few more words the Vision suddenly disappeared.

'When the vision takes place,' said Bernadette in her own language, 'I see the light first and then the Lady; but when it ceases, the Lady first disappears and then the light goes.'*

On her return home, Bernadette informed her parents of the promise she had made to the strange Lady to visit the grotto during fifteen consecutive days. Antoinette and Madame Millet, on their part, recounted also what had passed—the wonderful transfiguration of the child during the Apparition, the words of the Lady, and the invitation to repeat her visits for a space of fifteen days. The rumour of so strange an occurrence was not slow to spread, and it naturally excited profound agitation throughout every class in the country. Thursday is the market-day at Lourdes; there was the usual throng of people there on February 18, 1858, so that men took home with them to the mountains the astounding news; and Barèges, and Tarbes, and Cauterets, and St. Pé and Nay began to discuss and become inquisitive on the subject. The next day, when Bernadette arrived, there were about a hundred persons awaiting her at the grotto; the day after there were from four to five hundred; and on the Sunday the crowd exceeded a thousand.

And yet, what was it that had been seen? What was it that had been heard? Nothing more than a little child praying, who said she saw a beautiful Lady, who held conversation with her. An electric current, an irresistible influence from which none could protect himself, seemed to have mastered the entire population, at the word of an illiterate shepherdess, of a poor child almost unknown in

* 'Quand la vision a lieu, disait-elle en son langage, je vois la lumière tout d'abord et ensuite la "Dame;" quand la vision cesse, c'est la "Dame" qui disparaît la première et la lumière en second lieu.'

the town. In the workshop, in the timber yard, in the quarry, at evening parties, at the club, at the *café*, in the hotels, on the public squares, in the streets, among the rich, among the poor, in the morning, in the evening, in private as in public, nothing was discussed except this occurrence. Whatever opinion men entertained regarding it, whether hostile or favourable, it preoccupied the thoughts and engaged the conversation of everyone. And then, as may be supposed, even in a town so well regulated as Lourdes, there were discussions and doubts and criticisms and sneers. Here is the account that is given by a 'liberal' journal of the time, 'Le Lavédan,' February 18, 1858:—'We will not relate to-day the thousand versions of this matter that are afloat; we will only say that the young girl goes every morning to pray at the entrance of the grotto, a taper in her hand, and accompanied by more than five hundred persons. There she is seen to pass from a state of the greatest tranquillity into one of absolute ecstasy; a sweet smile plays over her face, tears fall from her motionless eyes, which remain fixed on the grotto, where she believes that she sees the blessed Virgin. We shall keep our readers *au courant de cette aventure*, which every day gains more supporters;' or, as the writer terms them, 'adeptes.' The facts were too notorious to be denied even by a 'liberal' journal, and therefore the journalist satisfies his conscience by recounting them with a sneer.

'Such phenomena are rare,' said one of the most distinguished physicians of the town, Dr. Dozous. 'As for me, I shall not lose the opportunity of studying the progress of this one with care. The partisans of the supernatural are too fond of throwing these sorts of things in the face of medical science; I will scrupulously examine, *de visu* and by my own experience, the subject which is now presented to us, at our own door.'

Several gentlemen of the bar—M. Pougat, president of the Courts; M. Estrade, receiver of indirect taxes, and others—resolved personally to watch the proceedings at

the grotto during the fortnight. The clergy naturally would not have been the last to feel the impression of these extraordinary assertions; but, with laudable tact and prudence, their attitude was cautious and reserved, and they resolved to examine with great care all the circumstances that might develope themselves. Up to that time they received the different reports with distrust, while they withheld from lightly pronouncing any opinion. The little girl, whose name had got into everyone's mouth so suddenly, was not known to the priests of the town. It is true that she had gone regularly to the catechism since her return from the country; but the ecclesiastic who had charge of the class had not particularly observed her; and when he had occasion to call her up for interrogation, he had merely remarked her simplicity and ignorance upon all matters appertaining to the Christian doctrine.

The parish at that time was governed by a remarkable priest, of whom M. Henri Lasserre gives the following characteristic portraiture:—'The Abbé Peyramale, at that time about fifty years of age, had been for two years the *curé-doyen* of the town and canton of Lourdes. Nature had made him rough, sometimes even unto violence, in the pursuit of good; but grace had modified, if not entirely subdued, his warmth of character. The fire of his temperament, completely extinguished in all that concerned himself, burned hotly for all that regarded the Church of God. In the pulpit his language, always apostolical, was sometimes harsh. He attacked all that was evil; and no abuse, no moral disorder, in whomsoever it was evinced, found him feeble or indifferent. Occasionally society had shrunk under the lash of his scourging words, and protested against his rigour. But, nevertheless, wherever chastisement was required, he persisted until he had brought the sinner to a sense of his duty. This sort of men—*hommes de devoir*—sometimes are thought troublesome, and excuse seldom is made for the independence and sincerity of their language. It was, however, pardoned in this good priest when he was seen passing through

the streets in his old patched cassock, his large shoes that had been often mended, and his battered three-cornered hat. It was well known, however, that the saving on his toilette fructified for the benefit of the poor. This priest, so austere in his manners and strict in its tenets, had a heart of overflowing charity; and he expended his income in relieving the wants of others, with as much secrecy as possible. But even his humility could not throw a sufficient veil over his life of sacrifice; the gratitude of the poor had lifted it up, so that he was regarded as an object of universal veneration by his parishioners. It was enough to see the manner in which they doffed their caps as he passed, to hear the familiar and affectionate accents of the poor, as they saluted him with '*Bonjour, M. le Curé,*' to understand what a sacred bond united the pastor with his flock. The freethinkers of the town used to say of him, 'He is not always pleasant, but he is charitable and does not think of money. He is the best of men, in spite of the *soutane.*

'Full of trustfulness and good nature in private life, never suspecting evil, and sometimes even allowing himself to be deceived by those who traded upon his goodness, in his priestly character he was prudent to a degree whereever the interests of his ministry and of religion were concerned. It was often possible to deceive the man—the priest, never. There are graces especial to every state (*Il y a des grâces d'état*), and he eminently possessed those of his. This remarkable priest united to the heart of an apostle rare good sense and firmness of character, which nothing could shake when truth or duty were in question. The events that were occurring at Lourdes brought into full light these great qualities. One would say that Providence had placed such a man there, at this epoch, by especial design.'*

Overcoming his natural impatience, or, as M. Lasserre

* In a note, M. Lasserre makes the following apology for thus putting the character of his friend before the public, and I take leave to adopt it for myself:—'Du plus profond de mon cœur je demande pardon à M. l'abbé Peyramale du bien que je dis ici de lui, et dont l'expression, je le sais, le fera

terms it, 'sa peu expectante nature,' the Abbé Peyramale determined to wait until events should take some clear and positive course, or until higher ecclesiastical authority should pronounce upon them, before he or his clergy should take any part in the occurrences at the grotto. At the same time he commissioned some intelligent laymen, in whom he placed confidence, to watch the proceedings, and report to him daily. 'Let them alone' ('Laissons faire'), he used to say to those who urged him to take some action; 'if, on the one hand, duty obliges us rigorously to examine all that is now passing, on the other prudence forbids us to mingle with the crowd that frequents the grotto, or join in their hymns. We will remain away, and thus avoid either giving the sanction of our presence to that which may be only an illusion, or opposing by an attitude of hostility that which may be the work of God. To go there as simple spectators would be impossible as long as we wear our clerical habit. The people, as soon as they saw a priest among them, would urge him to place himself at their head and intone the hymns. If he yielded to that pressure, or to his own enthusiasm, and that later it should turn out that these apparitions are only a delusion and a fraud, religion would be much compromised by his indiscretion. If, on the contrary, he held back, and that it should become manifest that this is the work of God, evil consequences might arise from his resistance. Let us remain away then, lest our premature presence may cause any difficulty in this matter. Let us leave its development to God. If it is his work, He needs not our assistance; if it is not his work, He will infallibly mark the moment when it will be our duty to interpose and do battle in his name. In one word, 'Laissons agir la Providence.'

souffrir cruellement. Pour imposer cette souffrance à son humilité, il a fallu, non-seulement l'intérêt spéculatif de la vérité, mais encore la nécessité où je suis, en écrivant cette histoire, de tout dire, pour montrer les voies secrètes de Dieu et l'action manifeste de sa main. Historien, j'écris sans haine et sans amitiés personnelles, et j'ai considéré comme un devoir de ne m'imposer d'autres lois que celle d'exposer la vérité telle que Dieu me permet de la voir et de la traduire.'—*Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, p. 53.

Mgr. Laurence, the Bishop of Tarbes, fully approved the prudence of the wise curé, and prohibited the clergy of the diocese generally from mixing themselves up in any way with the events at Lourdes. If a priest were consulted in the confessional, or otherwise, on the matter, the prescribed answer was to be, 'We do not go there ourselves, and we do not pronounce any opinion upon occurrences that we are not yet able fully to understand: go there or not, as you think best; we do not undertake either to recommend or forbid it.' This line of conduct was strictly observed, although not without some difficulty, and the effect was, that amid this entire population, excited and moved by these alleged apparitions, not one priest was to be seen. God inspired his clergy with strength to withstand the torrent and remain motionless amidst the movement, that it might become the more manifest that the hand of man did not influence the prodigy, and that its origin must be sought elsewhere.

In the interval the civil authority began to show some jealousy, if not alarm. It was not to be admitted that, in the middle of this enlightened nineteenth century, a miracle was to intrude itself upon civilised society, and that, too, without the permission of the *préfet*, the *maire*, or even the commissary of police! Never does the supernatural, at any epoch or in any country, display itself without encountering, under different names and aspects, the same opposition. Herod and Caiaphas, Pilate and Joseph of Arimathea, Peter and Thomas, and the devout women of Jerusalem, the open, ermined enemy, the cowardly, the weak, the devoted, the doubting, the timid, and the heroic belong to all lands and to all times. But it is above all and everywhere in the official circle that the supernatural and the divine find their most determined opponents; and thus on this occasion, while the priesthood stood aloof, the police interfered.

I will again borrow from M. Lasserre, and this time it shall be his picture of the individual who then filled the position of commissary of police at Lourdes. It is an ex-

cellent photograph of certain men in authority in France, and will serve to show the characters with whom poor Bernadette and the mysterious Lady had to contend. 'The most intelligent of the little legion of functionaries at that time at Lourdes undoubtedly was M. Jacomet, although M. Jacomet was the lowest of all in the hierarchy, occupying only the modest position of commissary of police. He was young, very sagacious in certain circumstances, and gifted with a talent of speech rare in his class. His *finesse* was extreme, and nobody could better see through rogues and their roguery. He had a marvellous aptitude in unravelling their schemes, and astonishing stories are told of him in this respect. He was much less skilled in dealing with honest folk. Perfectly at home when he had to contend with a complicated affair, simplicity often confounded him. Truth generally disconcerted him; disinterestedness excited his distrust; and his official mind, ever on the look out for scheming and duplicity, could not comprehend candour or truth. This caused him to regard fervent piety as an imposture, towards which he was implacable. Similar contradictions are often found in men of his profession, whose necessity it is, in seeking out crime, to become familiar only with villany. Their temperament after a short time becomes uneasy and suspicious, enabling them to do wonders when they have to deal with knaves and rogues, but causing them to commit gross mistakes when they are in contact with honest simple people. Although young, Jacomet had fully contracted this vice habitual to men long in the service. He resembled those Pyrenean horses that tread with firm foot the stony paths of the mountains, but stumble at every step on the level road; or rather those night-birds that can see only in the darkness, and in full daylight knock themselves against the trees and the walls. While perfectly satisfied with himself, his capacity, and his appearance, Jacomet was dissatisfied with his position as unworthy of his supreme intelligence. From this arose a certain uneasy conceit united to a desire to signalise him-

self. He exercised great influence, amounting almost to ascendency, over his chiefs, and he even affected equality with the *Procureur impérial* and all the other officials. He interfered in everything, domineered over everybody, and aspired to direct the affairs of the town altogether. As to the district, the *préfet* saw only through the eyes of Jacomet.'* And this was the man to whom the supervision of Bernadette and the Apparition was assigned.

It was the third day of the fortnight during which she had promised to visit the grotto daily; the 21st of February being the first Sunday of Lent in that year. Before sunrise several thousand people were assembled at the grotto, on the banks of the Gave, and in the meadow; for this was the hour at which Bernadette habitually came. She arrived as usual, enveloped in her white *capulet*, and followed by her mother and sister, and some of her relations. On the two preceding days her parents were present during her ecstasy; and they, who previously had reproved and ridiculed her, having seen her transfigured, now believed in the truth of her story. Quietly and without embarrassment she traversed the crowd, who respectfully opened a passage for her; and without noticing the attention that was fixed upon her, she knelt down before the niche where the rose-bush was waving, calm and recollected, as though she was in a remote corner of some quiet church. In a few minutes her countenance became illuminated; her complexion became slightly pallid, as if her human nature was overpowered by the presence of the vision. She looked as if she had entered a higher region of beatitude, where she gazed upon things that are not visible here below. Her half-opened mouth was panting with admiration; her eyes, immovable and full of happiness, seemed to contemplate some incorporeal loveliness, which no other eye could discern, but whose presence seemed felt by everyone, as if reflected back from the countenance of that privileged child:

* *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, p. 61.

I see a face you cannot see,
I hear a voice you cannot hear.

And this poor peasant girl, so vulgar and illiterate, seemed no more to belong to earth.

All those who have seen Bernadette in ecstasy speak of it as a thing which is beyond description or comparison; and their impression of the scene remains as vivid at the end of ten years as it was at the first moment. Although her attention seemed entirely absorbed by the contemplation of the vision, she was not totally unconscious of what was passing around her. Her taper having been extinguished, she put out her hand to have it relighted; and some person having endeavoured to touch the rose-bush with a stick, she made a sign to desist, because, as she afterwards said, she was afraid lest he might do harm to the Lady. On this occasion one of those whose names have been already cited, Dr. Dozous, was at her side. 'This is not,' he said, 'either catalepsy with its stiffness, nor the unconscious ecstasy of one suffering under hallucination; it is an extraordinary fact belonging to a class altogether unknown to medicine.'* He felt her pulse; it was perfectly calm and regular, as in her ordinary state. 'There is no unhealthy excitement here,' he said, and this eminent physician turned away more and more perplexed.

At that moment the child, still on its knees, made a forward movement towards the grotto. As she afterwards told, the Apparition had changed its place, and looked at Bernadette with an expression full of sorrow. 'What is the matter? What must I do?' murmured the child. 'Pray for sinners!' replied the Mother of the human race.† Her countenance collapsed, and large tear-drops rolled down her cheeks: the Vision had vanished. The anxious crowd pressed round her, excited

* 'Ce n'est là ni la catalepsie avec sa roideur, ni l'extase inconsciente des hallucinés; c'est un fait extraordinaire, d'un ordre tout-à-fait inconnu à la médecine.'

† 'Qu'avez-vous? que faut-il faire?' murmura l'enfant. 'Prier pour les pécheurs,' répondit la Mère du genre humain.

and overpowered, and thoroughly convinced, although invisible to them, that Bernadette had held intercourse with the supernatural.

From that day forward they called her the Seer ('La Voyante').

During all that day nothing was talked of in Lourdes but that which had been witnessed by so many at the grotto; and those who had seen believed, and no one doubted. In the afternoon, when Bernadette left the church after vespers, she was surrounded by the faithful, who interrogated her with curiosity and interest; while she, embarrassed by their questions, endeavoured to get quietly home. At that instant a man, clad in the garb of authority, came up to her, and, touching her on the shoulder, said:

'In the name of the law' ('Au nom de la loi').

'What do you want of me?' asked the child.

'I have an order to arrest you and take you with me.'

'Where?'

'To the commissary of police. Follow me.'

A threatening murmur uprose through that crowd. Many of those present had seen her that morning transfigured in a divine ecstasy and illuminated by a celestial radiance; and when they saw the agent of police place his hand upon her they chafed with indignation and showed symptoms of interposing. But a priest, who was coming out of the church, made a sign to them to restrain themselves, saying: 'Let authority take its course' ('Laissez faire à l'autorité'), and the multitude was calmed. However, they followed Bernadette as the officer led her away. The police office was not distant. The sergeant entered with his prisoner, and having locked and bolted the door, he ushered her into the presence of the redoubtable M. Jacomet. An immense crowd kept guard outside. By a strange coincidence the Gradual of the Mass of that day had singular appropriateness to her position: 'Angelis suis Deus mandavit de te, et custodiunt te in omnibus

viis tuis. In manibus portabunt te, ne umquam offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum.' And so it proved to be with Bernadette.

The limits to which I have confined myself do not permit me to report the details of this interview between Jacomet and Bernadette, nor yet to describe the conflict between police astuteness, anxious to entrap unwary ignorance, and the straightforward truthfulness of that simple child. It is given with graphic eloquence by M. Lasserre, and forms a page of powerful narrative that is not surpassed, even by that distinguished writer himself. It is not the language of imagination; for M. Lasserre speaks nothing in his recital which he has not received from the most authentic sources, and verified by the parties themselves and by official documents. Nothing that the most practised dexterity in cross-examination could suggest was wanting on the part of Jacomet to entrap Bernadette into some contradiction of herself, or the admission of something that would authorise him to detain her in custody. But she never varied from her story in a single word or point; and, baffled by her truth, in which, however, he did not believe, he felt himself reduced to empty threats, and said:

'If you continue to go to the grotto I will send you to prison; and you shall not leave it until you have promised never to return to Massabielle.'

'I have promised the Vision to go there,' answered the child, 'and when the time for me to do so arrives, I feel myself urged by something within which I cannot resist.'

M. Estrade was present during these interrogatories, and his incredulity was severely shaken by the persistence and clearness of her replies. Turning to Jacomet at their conclusion, he said:

'She is sincere.' To which he replied, 'She is clever.'

They knew the apprehensions of her father, and the next proceeding was to terrify him with the vengeance of the law if he did not prevent Bernadette from going to the grotto. In this manner Jacomet hoped to attain his ends,

and, in some measure, merit the reward of his superiors and the applause of his friends among the 'libres penseurs' of the locality.

'You see that all these gentlemen of the country are against us,' said her father; 'and if you return to the grotto, M. Jacomet, who can do anything, will put us all in prison; so do not go there.'

'But, father,' she answered, 'when I go there it is not altogether of my own accord. At a certain moment I feel something within me which impels me and drives me on.'

'However that may be,' he said, 'I formally forbid you to go there any more; and I am sure that you will not disobey me for the first time in your life.'

Overawed by her habitual submission to parental authority, Bernadette meekly rejoined, 'I will do my best to hinder myself from going there, and will endeavour to resist the attraction which draws me.'

On the next day, February 22, the usual crowd assembled at the grotto at break of day; but no Bernadette was there. Her parents had detained her, and compelled her to go to school. At school the nuns thought right to reprove her also; they treated her story as visionary and foolish, and added their prohibition to that of her parents. Nothing could paint the anguish which she suffered between this threefold prohibition—her promise to the Vision and her inward impulsion towards the grotto. The children were in the habit of returning home at noon for their midday repast, and Bernadette walked slowly back with the others, her soul harassed between the double but contradictory duty of obedience to her parents and her promise to the mysterious Lady. The church clock was striking the *angelus*. At that instant a sudden power took strong possession of her, acting not on her mind but on her body, and, as if with a giant's arm, drove her from her homeward road and carried her irresistibly to the path that led to the grotto. She was no longer mistress of her movements; it was as if the wind had caught up an autumnal leaf from the ground and blew it wherever it

listed. Bernadette inwardly rejoiced as she found herself, in her own despite, once more in front of the grotto. There were many people still waiting for her arrival, and she quietly placed herself in her usual position and began to recite the Rosary. A long interval elapsed, and Bernadette was fervent in her prayer, but the Vision did not present itself, and she withdrew, mortified and disappointed. 'Why have you left me?' said the child to herself. 'Am I not here according to my promise? Why have you left me?'*

There was much congratulation in the precincts of police authority when this disappointment became known: and the philosophers of the town felicitated Jacomet on the success with which he had suppressed the phantom and banished the miracle.

De par le roi, défense à Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu.

'Where have you come from?' said her father to her as she entered. She told him all that had happened; and, after reflecting a little time, he said, 'You have never told me a lie, and, since you say that some invincible force dragged you to the grotto, I withdraw my prohibition and leave you free to go as you like.' And the soul of Bernadette was filled with joy.

On the next morning, the 23rd, when Bernadette arrived before daybreak, the usual crowd was assembled at the grotto. Her calm simplicity had not undergone any alteration in consequence either of the hostility of some or of the veneration of others; but the uneasiness experienced during the last day had left some slight traces upon her features. She knelt down in her accustomed manner, with the lighted taper and her beads. Scarcely had her prayers begun to ascend to heaven when the ineffable Vision presented itself to her, and addressing her by name, said:

* 'Pourquoi avez-vous disparue? pensait l'enfant. Ne suis-je pas venue suivant ma promesse? Pourquoi m'avez-vous abandonnée'

'Bernadette!'

'I am here' ('Me voici'), answered the child.

'I have to tell you a secret,' she went on, 'which concerns yourself alone. Will you promise never to repeat it to any person in the world?'

'I promise,' said Bernadette; and then took place a dialogue, the import of which it is not allowable nor possible for us to investigate.

'And now, my child,' she continued, 'go and tell the priests that I wish that a chapel should be erected to me here;'* and, having pronounced these words, she disappeared, and the countenance of Bernadette relapsed into shade, as the earth at evening when the sun withdraws its vivifying rays.

The crowd gathered round her, anxious to know what had passed between her and the Vision; for everyone comprehended that this time she had not been disappointed.

'What did she say to you?' was the universal question.

'She told me two things; one of them for myself alone, and the other for the priests, and I will go at once to tell it to them.' She expressed her astonishment that they, the bystanders, had not heard it also, and she betook herself with all speed to the house of the curé, to deliver her message.

Although fully recognising the possibility of a supernatural apparition, even in these days, the Abbé Peyramale had some difficulty in crediting, upon the word of a child, the reality of the extraordinary vision which was said to have manifested itself on the banks of the Gave. Had he seen Bernadette in ecstatic prayer, his scepticism might have been removed; but he had heard the story only from others, and therefore gravely doubted both the fact of the apparition and its divine character. He knew that the Spirit of Darkness sometimes is allowed to clothe

* 'Et maintenant, ma fille, allez, allez dire aux prêtres que je veux que l'on m'élève ici une chapelle.'

himself in the form of an angel of light; and, fearing such an illusion, he received Bernadette with distrust and almost with severity.

'Are not you Bernadette, the daughter of Soubirous, the miller?' he said to her, with much austerity, as she came to him across his garden. 'What do you want with me?'

'Yes, it is I, Monsieur le Curé,' she humbly answered; 'and I come on the part of the Lady ("La Dame") who appears to me at the grotto of Massabielle.'

'Oh! yes,' said the priest, interrupting her; 'you pretend to have visions, and you circulate your stories throughout the country. What is all this about? What are all these extraordinary things that you boast, and which there is nothing to prove?'

Bernadette was both pained and surprised at this reception; however, concealing the confusion which she inwardly felt, she told her story with a simplicity and conviction that went far to attest its truth. The man of God rose superior to his foregone prejudices, and in the limpid eyes, the pure countenance, and the earnest tones of the peasant girl he discerned the importance and the reality of her mission. Notwithstanding, he considered it to be his duty to subject her to a searching examination.

'Don't you know even the name of this Lady?' he said, looking at her sternly.

'No,' replied Bernadette; 'she has not told me who she is.'

'Those who credit you,' said the priest, 'imagine that she is the blessed Virgin; but don't you well know,' he added, with a grave and menacing tone of voice, 'that if you falsely pretend to have seen Her in that grotto, you are taking the sure means never to see Her in heaven? Now, you alone say that you see Her; if you tell a lie here below, there will be others who will see Her there above, and for your falsehood you will be sent for ever far away from Her, down into hell' ('à jamais dans l'enfer').

'I do not know if it is the blessed Virgin, M. le Curé,'

replied the child; 'but I see the vision as plainly as I see you, and she speaks to me as you speak; and I have come to tell you on her part that she wishes that a chapel should be erected to Her at the rocks of Massabielle, where she appears to me.'

The good priest looked at her for some time with wonder, and, remaining silent and thoughtful, he said at last: 'After all, it is possible' ('Après tout, c'est possible'). The idea that the Mother of God should send to him, an humble priest, a direct message filled him with agitation and trouble.

Among those whom a transcendent contempt for superstition had withheld hitherto from joining the multitude in their visits to the grotto was M. Estrade, receiver of indirect taxes, whom we have already mentioned as present at the interrogatory of Bernadette by Jacomet. He now determined to go and see, that he might exercise his own judgment upon the occurrences that were daily attracting the crowd. He had been greatly struck, at her examination, by her accent of sincerity, and was disposed to attribute her story to certain hallucinations of her mind rather than to any deceit. Being inclined to scepticism on all subjects appertaining to the supernatural, he repaired to the grotto in a frame of mind little formed for accepting a fraud. He has given the following narrative of what he witnessed:—

'I arrived at the grotto determined to examine attentively, and, to say the truth, not unwilling to criticise and ridicule, as I expected to be present at the exhibition of some grotesque comedy. An immense crowd became massed by degrees about and around those wild rocks. I wondered within myself at the simplicity of so many dupes, and I laughed at the credulity of a parcel of good women who were gaping, on their knees, before the grotto. We got there very early, and, thanks to my broad shoulders, I was able to push to the foremost rank, and thus I got close to Bernadette, who arrived at the usual hour, about sunrise. I remarked in her infantine coun-

tenance the same character of sweetness, innocence, and tranquillity which had struck me so much when I saw her a few days before with the commissary of police. She knelt down naturally, without ostentation or embarrassment, and without taking any notice of the crowd about her, just as if she were in a church, or in a desert, far from human eye. She took out her beads and began to pray; whereupon her countenance suddenly seemed to receive and reflect an unseen light. She became motionless, wonder-struck, as if charmed, and beaming with happiness, while she kept her eye intently fixed upon the opening of the grotto. I looked at it also; but I saw nothing, absolutely nothing, except the naked branches of the wild rose. And yet—shall I acknowledge it?—in presence of that child's transfiguration, all my former prejudices, all my philosophical objections, all my preconceived disbelief faded away, and gave place to an inexplicable sentiment which became master of me in my despite. I felt certain, as it were, by irresistible intuition, that a mysterious being was truly there. I did not see her with my eyes; but my soul, and that of the innumerable spectators about me at that solemn moment, saw her with the light of an interior conviction, strong as any human evidence. Beyond all doubt a divine being was there. ("Oui, je l'atteste, un être divin était là.") Suddenly and completely transfigured, it was no longer Bernadette. She seemed an angel of light, consumed in unspeakable rapture. She had no longer the same visage; another intelligence, another life, and, I was going to say, another soul was depicted upon it. She had not the least resemblance to herself, and seemed as if she was altogether another person. Her attitudes, her smallest movement, the manner, for example, in which she made the sign of the cross, had a nobleness, dignity, and grandeur that was more than human. She opened her large eyes as if they could not be satisfied with what she gazed upon; it seemed as if she feared to bend her lids lest she should lose for an instant the ravishing object which she was con-

templating. She smiled occasionally in a manner which conveyed the idea of ecstatic beatitude.

'All the spectators were affected in the same manner that I was. Like them I held my breath, expecting to hear the colloquy which evidently was being carried on between the Vision and the child. She was listening with an expression of the most profound respect, or, to convey myself more properly, of absolute adoration mingled with illimitable love and melting delight. Sometimes, however, a shade of sadness passed over her face, but its habitual expression was that of great joy. I observed that at times she scarcely breathed. During all this time she held her beads in her hand, sometimes motionless, as if lost in the abyss of that divine vision; at another time she passed them irregularly over her fingers as her countenance varied in its expression of admiration or of delight or of prayer. Occasionally she made the sign of the cross in that devout, noble, commanding fashion of which I have already spoken. If, indeed, they make the sign of the cross in heaven, it must be like that made by Bernadette in ecstasy. The action with her in some sort seemed to embrace the infinite.'*

During this interview Bernadette was seen to move upon her knees from the place on the bank of the Gave where she was praying to the bottom of the grotto. The distance was about fifty feet. While she was thus mounting that abrupt ascent, the persons near her heard her distinctly say the words, 'Penance! Penance! Penance!'

'A few minutes after her ecstasy was over,' M. Estrade continues, 'she got up and returned quietly to the town. She was no longer anything but a poor girl in tatters, whom nobody could have supposed to have taken part in any extraordinary transaction.'

The crowd, as generally happened after each apparition, examined the grotto from top to bottom, and M. Estrade

* This narrative was published by Louis Veuillot in the *Univers* of July 28, 1858; and ten years later was repeated by M. Estrade *vivâ voce* to M. Lasserre, from whom I have taken it.

himself carefully explored it. Everyone expected to find in it something unusual; but it was only an ordinary cave in a hard rock, with a dry bottom, where there was not anything uncommon to be discovered. In reporting the occurrences of this day to the curé, Bernadette said:

'She told me to pray for sinners and to mount up to the end of the grotto; and she cried out three times the word "Penance!" which I repeated as I dragged myself upward on my knees. Then she told me a second secret, which is for myself alone, and disappeared.'

'And what did you find at the end of the grotto?'

'After she disappeared (for while she is there I pay attention only to her, and she absorbs me quite) I looked about, and I saw nothing but the rock, and on the ground some blades of grass, which were growing in the dust.'

The curé remained thoughtful for a space, and said, 'We must wait' ('Attendons').

And now, whenever Bernadette casually passed along the streets, a crowd always gathered and followed her. Some persons, among whom was M. Dufo, an advocate and one of the leading men of the country, sent for her and questioned her minutely. Having spoken with her, they became convinced of the truth of the vision, as M. Estrade had been on seeing her at the grotto. Many persons visited her parents' house, that they might hear the story from her own lips. In a corner of the room where she sat there was a little oratory, adorned with flowers, medals, pious pictures, and surmounted by a statuette of the Virgin. It presented an appearance of devotional luxury but little in keeping with the rest of the apartment, which was miserably furnished. A truckle bed (*grabat*), a few old chairs, a broken-legged table, constituted the entire furniture. Their visitors could not fail to be struck at the sight of this great poverty, and few could resist the desire of leaving some donation. But every offering was refused, however delicately tendered.

One afternoon, when the throng of the day had sub-

sided, and only a poor neighbour was seated at the fireside, a strange gentleman entered. He questioned Bernadette at much length, sought to be informed on every detail, and testified great interest in her story. He felicitated her on the favour which she had received from Heaven, and manifested his compassion at the apparent wretchedness of her worldly condition.

'I am rich,' he said, 'allow me to help you;' and he placed on the table a purse half opened, which was full of gold.

A blush of indignation suffused the cheek of Bernadette, and she replied, with some excitement, 'I desire nothing, Monsieur; take that back' ('reprenez cela'), at the same time pushing the purse towards the unknown.

'It is not for you, my child,' he added, 'it is for your parents who are in want, and whom you should not prevent me from relieving.'

'Neither Bernadette nor we desire anything,' exclaimed the father and mother together.

'You are poor,' continued the stranger with persistence. 'I feel much interest in you. I fear it must be through a false pride that you refuse.'

'No, Monsieur; we positively will not receive anything; take back your gold,' was the answer; and the stranger left them, disconcerted and astonished at their refusal. There were persons who thought that this generous visitor was in the pay of Jacomet, and sent by him to see how far the family Soubirous were disposed to make traffic of the assertions of their daughter.

We have now come to February 25, which was the first Thursday in Lent, and Bernadette is kneeling before the rocks of Massabielle. An innumerable multitude had preceded and were pressing around her. Although there were many incredulous among them, and several who had come to indulge idle curiosity, a religious silence pervaded them as soon as she was seen to approach. All, unbelieving as well as believing, by a common instinct uncovered their heads, and most of them knelt down when

she knelt. At the same moment the Apparition manifested itself to Bernadette, and she was transported in ecstasy. As usual the luminous Lady appeared in the oval excavation of the rock, her feet touching the wild rose-bush. Bernadette's features beamed with an expression of unfathomable love, a sweet and profound sentiment inundating her soul with delight.

'My daughter,' said the Vision, 'I wish to tell you for yourself alone another secret, which you must not reveal to anyone.' And having spoken to her in her soft, low, melodious voice, she continued: 'Now, go and drink, and wash yourself in the fountain, and eat of the grass which is growing at its side.'*

Bernadette looked about for the fountain, but not seeing any streamlet there, she was proceeding towards the Gave, when the Vision made a gesture to stop her, and said:

'Don't go there. I did not tell you to drink in the Gave; go to the fountain, it is here.' ('N'allez point là. Je n'ai point dit de boire au Gave; allez à la fontaine, elle est ici.')

And stretching out her hand, she pointed with her finger to the right side of the grotto, where Bernadette had ascended on her knees on the preceding morning. Having reached the spot, she saw nothing like a fountain; there were merely some scattered tufts of a kind of grass called *la Dorine*, a species of saxifrage that grows about rocks. In the meantime, the spectators, who heard nothing of this conversation, were much puzzled by her movements, especially when they saw her stoop down and scrape the earth with her little hands. Under this operation the earth became moist, until, issuing as if from unknown depths, a mysterious stream began to trickle drop by drop on the hands of Bernadette, and fill the hollow that she had made. At first it seemed to be nothing but mud, and Bernadette had some repugnance to taste it; but this

* 'Et maintenant, allez boire et vous laver à la fontaine, et mangez l'herbe qui pousse à côté.'

she overcame, drank it, washed herself, and ate a morsel of the wild grass that was growing at the foot of the rocks. It then flowed downward in a small thread, and wound its tiny course slowly to the river. When Bernadette had fulfilled the directions that I have described, the Apparition looked at her approvingly and vanished.

The emotion of the people at witnessing this prodigy was extreme, and as soon as Bernadette had recovered from her ecstasy, they precipitated themselves into the grotto; each one wishing to see the hollow from which the stream flowed and taste its waters. It was at seven in the morning that this occurred; and being market-day at Tarbes, the news was conveyed thither by several who had been eye-witnesses. This gave further development to the impressions produced by the events which had been taking place at Massabielle during the week. A great many strangers came to Lourdes over night and slept there, that they might be at the grotto early in the morning. Others travelled all night for the same purpose, and on the day after the bursting forth of the fountain, from five to six thousand persons encamped on the rocks and the rising ground about and in face of the grotto. When she appeared they all hailed her, crying out, 'Here comes the saint!' ('Voilà la sainte!'); and many of them sought to touch her garments as sacred.

On that day the Vision did not reveal itself, as if she feared the effect of so much favour upon Bernadette's mind. She prayed for a long time; but in vain—no ray of celestial light passed over her, and no supernatural transfiguration gave evidence of her intercourse with the invisible. She rose sadly from her knees, and answered gravely to those who addressed her, telling them that the Vision had not appeared ('la Vision d'en haut n'était point apparue').

After a few days it was found that the waters of this fountain had a curative virtue; and a sudden recovery effected in the person of Louis Bourriette, a poor cripple of Lourdes, proclaimed their miraculous powers. I will

not, however, interrupt my narrative here, but will reserve the details of this and other miracles for the close of this account. The exaltation of the people had now reached its height; numbers daily visited the wonder-working fountain; and when night came on, the pious visitors lit up the grotto with numerous tapers. Rich and poor, children and adults, brought their candles, illuminating the grotto as if it was a consecrated altar. And yet there was neither priest nor pontiff to direct them—the clergy still holding aloof. The pilgrims sang *cantiques* and the Litany of Loretto; and it was beautiful in the stillness of the night to hear that enthusiastic multitude, with one voice chant to the stars the praises of Mary: *Mater admirabilis, Sedes sapientiæ, Causa nostræ letitiæ, ora pro nobis!*

At the hour when, in the social enjoyment of evening, men frequent the *cafés* and public resorts, and when the wise men of the world discuss politics, sometimes even religion, these occurrences were nightly criticised; and among this class of sages at Lourdes there was now much uncertainty and dismay. One of their strongest minds was pleased to observe that 'it was notorious that there never had been any water or spring in that place; that it must be a pool produced by some accidental infiltration, just at the moment that this Bernadette was scratching there.' 'No doubt, it is evidently so,' they all re-echoed; and thus the wisdom of the Sanhedrim directed the opinion of the liberals of the little town.

The law was not to be baffled, and Bernadette was again summoned before the tribunal. This time she had to answer the interrogatories of the crown prosecutor; but her replies were as simple and consistent as they had been to Jacomet, and the authorities could find no excuse to take any penal steps against her. Thereupon the enemies of superstition, as they naïvely called themselves, went so far as to urge the Mayor of Lourdes, M. Lacadé, to forbid the assemblage of the people on the lands at Massabielle, inasmuch as the ground was the property of the municipality. But this worthy magistrate did not yield to

their importunities. 'I know not,' he said, 'in the midst of so much clamour, where is truth; it is not my province to pronounce for or against. I must allow things to take their course, so long as there is no public disorder. It belongs to the bishop to decide the religious question; it belongs to the *préfet* to decide upon the measures which appertain to the civil power. As for me, I wish to keep out of the business; and as mayor I will not interfere except under the express orders of the *préfet.*' So said the mayor.

'Let us wait,' said the curé again; 'in human things it is enough to be prudent; in the things of God prudence should be tenfold.' ('Attendons. Dans les choses humaines c'est assez d'être une fois prudent. Il faut l'être dix fois dans les choses de Dieu.')

Notwithstanding the immense concourse of people which daily frequented the grotto, there had not been the slightest disturbance of public order. The general sentiment had invaded even the soldiers of the garrison, and they obtained permission from the commandant to pay their devotion in common with the civilians. They went so far as to form a volunteer guard along the way, to preserve discipline and order, and prevent the crowd from venturing too near to the banks of the river, which were sometimes dangerous.

On March 2, Bernadette again called on the curé, and renewed the request, on the part of the Apparition, to have a chapel built in her honour at Massabielle. Matters had wonderfully progressed during the short period that had elapsed since her first visit to him; the fountain had sprung up, miraculous cures had been effected by its waters, testifying, as it were, to the truth of her narration. The good priest for himself needed no further proof; his own conviction was established; but, notwithstanding the enthusiasm which secretly filled his heart, he restrained the premature expression of his opinion, and said, in reply to Bernadette: 'I fully believe all that you say, but it does not depend upon me to do what you ask in the name of

the Apparition. That is the duty of the bishop, whom I already have informed of all that has taken place. I will tell him of your renewed message; he alone can act.'

Monseigneur Bertrand-Sévère Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, was essentially the child of the diocese. He had been born and bred in it, and his distinguished merits had placed him rapidly in its highest ecclesiastical positions. He had been successively Superior of the Seminary (Petit-Séminaire) at Saint-Pé, of which he was the founder, and of the Great Seminary, and subsequently vicar-general of the diocese. All the priests of the diocese, with few exceptions, had been his pupils and disciples; he had been their master before being their bishop, and under one title or the other had governed and directed them for more than forty years. Whether professor or bishop, he loved them as his children, and was beloved by them as a parent. He could well say with his divine Master, 'I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.' This profound harmony, this perfect unity of mind and spirit between the old Superior of the Seminary and the clergy whom he had formed was one of the causes which procured his elevation to the episcopacy. Twelve years before this time, when the see of Tarbes became vacant by the death of Mgr. Double, the name of the Abbé Laurence was in everyone's mouth as in everyone's heart. The entire diocese was moved with the same hope and desire, and accordingly a petition was presented praying for his nomination. As was the case in the primitive ages of the Church, the bishop was pointed out and selected by the acclamation of the flock. It is enough to state these things to show that Mgr. Laurence and his clergy formed one great Christian family. Whenever a priest had any difficulty to be resolved, whenever there was any question too hard for his head or too heavy for his heart, he took his stick and went to the bishop's palace, from which he was sure to return enlightened and consoled.

The full warmth of his nature was concentrated in his patient and excellent heart, which, like that of the Apostle,

made itself all things to all men. By a remarkable contrast his head was pre-eminently cool, and he decided upon all matters solely according to reason and judgment. His intellect had an essentially practical turn: he was mistrustful of all exaggerated or impassioned characters, and there was nobody less accessible to the illusions of imagination or the influences of headlong enthusiasm. Ill-considered or hasty argument had no effect with him; if feeling governed his heart, reason alone ruled his head. Before taking action in any matter he gravely weighed the act, not only as regarded itself but as regarded all its possible consequences. And from this arose a certain slowness in his proceedings, resembling that of the Court of Rome, based, not upon indecision of character, but upon that mature wisdom which hesitates to pronounce until it has acquired the fullest information. Knowing that truth is eternal, and will infallibly triumph, he exercised in an eminent degree the virtue of patience, and knew how to await events. ('Mgr. Laurence savait attendre.') If he took time before he advanced, he never receded, and his decision once made was irrevocable, as might be expected from the deliberation with which he formed and pronounced it.

Gifted with rare power of observation, Mgr. Laurence understood men, and possessed in a high degree the difficult art of managing and directing them. Unless religion was in question, and some particular case called for energy, he sedulously avoided disagreement and conflict with the civil power. He was slow to hurt susceptibilities; for he knew that if the bishop made enemies, his enemies, through the weakness of human nature, generally became the enemies of religion, of his order, and the Church. Imbued deeply with the sense of his responsibility, he directed the bark of Peter with consummate prudence, constantly looking into the depths of the water that he might discern and avoid the hidden rocks. In a word, his wisdom was practical—that is to say, worldly prudence united to ascetic virtue. Remarkable as an

administrator, above all a man of order and discipline, uniting, according to the evangelical precept, the simplicity of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent, he was held in high estimation by all governments, from that of Louis-Philippe to the Empire. When he made a demand it was never refused, for the authorities knew that he would not ask for what was not just and necessary. He invariably cultivated the best terms with the civil power, without compromising his own position; and thus the spiritual and temporal authorities at Lourdes were living in the most amicable accord when the extraordinary events of which I am writing took place in its vicinity.*

The Abbé Peyramale laid before the bishop a detailed account of the wonderful facts of which the grotto at Massabielle had been the scene during a period of three weeks, the visions and ecstasies of Bernadette, the messages of the Apparition, the sudden appearance of the fountain, the supernatural cures, and the universal emotion of the people. The bishop applied his habitual sagacity and prudence to the examination of these marvels, and replied: 'The time has not yet come for episcopal authority to occupy itself with this matter. To pronounce such a judgment as might be expected from us we must proceed with caution; we must distrust the enthusiasm of first impressions, take the necessary time for reflection, and seek information in attentive and enlightened observation.' The bishop renewed his prohibition to the clergy to show themselves at the grotto; but he took measures to procure daily a reliable report of all that passed there. In consequence of this reserve on the part of the bishop and his clergy, the public were left to exercise their own intelligence upon these occurrences. If either fraud or error could be found connected with them, the liberals had full opportunity of acquiring the proof and denouncing the imposition to the world. If, on the other part, the hand of Heaven directed them, unaided they would triumph over every obstacle, and assert their

* M. Henri Lasserre, *Notre-Dame de Lourdes.*

divinity in the teeth of all opposition. While matters were in this state as regarded the clergy, the civil authorities began to feel themselves much perplexed.

Baron Massy at this period was the prefect of the Upper Pyrenees, a sincere but independent Catholic—we know what in all countries it is to be an 'independent Catholic'—and, as such, conscientiously disliking anything that could be nicknamed 'superstition.' He professed, as a good Christian might do, to believe the miracles recorded in Scripture, but outside these 'official' prodigies he was slow to credit the supernatural. He accepted the earlier miracles of the Church as indispensable to its foundation; but, according to his view, God was bound to stop there, and place a limit to his power of altering the laws of nature in the future. The part of the Almighty, in the eyes of this personage, was laid down in the creed supplemented by various concordats, and was, it almost might be said, codified and reduced to articles of law as well as to articles of faith. It was not the province of the Almighty to derange that code or disturb the constitutional order of things by inopportune intervention; it was enough that the constituted authorities of the land should rule, and leave the great Creator to repose for ever in the invisible depths of the infinite!

Baron Massy, withal, was very orthodox, but he deprecated any encroachment on the part of the supernatural. He was very religious, but he discouraged the intrusion of the clergy in secular affairs. 'Nothing too much' ('Rien de trop') was his motto. People who have this phrase continually on their lips generally finish by not giving enough. The *summum jus*, strict right, is very often not far removed from the *summa injuria*, sovereign wrong. A government man, he was essentially official, and of course was a supporter of all established things because they were established. With him, that which is, is that which ought to be: 'Whatever is, is right.' With him, that which was legal was lawful and legitimate. If it was said to him, '*Dura lex*,' he answered, '*Sed lex*,' and his

conscience reposed satisfied and tranquil on this dictum. He even went the lengths of thinking that whatever differed from the ordinary official routine was an attack upon things established, and ought not to be countenanced. With all this, his administrative intelligence was remarkable, and he governed his department with success. He had great quickness of observation united to promptitude in mastering a subject; but he had the defect of not seeing when he had made a mistake, and of never altering a decision, sometimes made precipitately, whether it regarded men or things. M. Massy was a Catholic not only in his profession but in his practice. Everyone did justice to his moral and domestic virtues, which were unimpeachable, and which were appreciated by the bishop. Up to this period they had lived in perfect harmony, and the prefect, upon his side, could not refuse his admiration to the eminent qualities of the prelate.*

Such was the man to whose wisdom and discretion it was confided to control, unravel, and expose the mysteries at Massabielle. He had been often heard to say that if he had been prefect of Isère at the time of the Apparition of La Salette, he would soon have made short work of it, as he was resolved to do with the pretenders at the grotto, and that he would soon reduce all that phantasmagoria to nothingness.† He commenced his proceedings by causing a secret surveillance to be kept day and night on the grotto, in expectation of discovering some trick or manœuvre regarding either the Apparition or the fountain, and he ordered the mayor to make a requisition to the commandant of the garrison to place the troops at his disposal, and to station them under arms along the road leading to the grotto and its neighbourhood.

* M. Henri Lasserre.

† 'Si j'avais été préfet de l'Isère, lors des prétendues apparitions de La Salette, j'en aurais bien vite eu raison, et il en eût été de cette prétendue apparition comme il va en être de celle de Lourdes. Toute cette fantasmagorie va rentrer dans le néant.' Was it by a singular retribution that when M. Massy was no longer found to be the right man in the right place at Lourdes, he was transferred to Isère, where he terminated his official as well as his natural life?

Notwithstanding the inquietude and offensive attitude of the authorities, the fame of these occurrences was propagated with electric rapidity. Bigorre and Bearn were stirred with increased emotion on hearing of the fountain and the miraculous cures, and the various roads throughout the department swarmed with pilgrims. At all hours and from all sides there arrived at Lourdes vehicles of every description; calèches, cars, chars-à-bancs, people on horseback, people on foot. Night did not bring rest to this prodigious movement; it was then that the shepherds came down from their hills by the bright starlight, that they might worship at the grotto with the rising sun. The hotels and even the private houses were continually filled until accommodation for the strangers became exhausted, and many were obliged to remain the whole night at the rocks, that they might be there when Bernadette ('La Voyante') should come to pray at the dawn.

Thursday, March 4, was the last day of the eventful fortnight. When morning broke upon the horizon a larger crowd than had assembled upon any previous day was gathered around and about the grotto. An old mountaineer, bowed under the load of years, supported his trembling hands on a heavily-ironed stick; around him was grouped his entire family; the grandmother, his aged partner, with her angular features, tanned and furrowed countenance, enveloped in her long black cloak lined with scarlet; near her, with hands fervently clasped in prayer, and beautiful and sedate as the maidens of the Roman Campagna, the young granddaughter knelt in devout expectancy. Many ran their fingers over their beads, many silently read their prayer-book. Many had in their hands or at their side an earthen jar in which to bring away the miraculous water, and their figures would often remind the spectator of the biblical portraits of Rebecca or of Rachel. There, too, might be seen the peasant of Gers with his large head, his bull-like neck, and his apoplectic face, not unlike the busts of Vitellius. At his side

might be remarked the fine noble features of the Béarnais, still resembling in their character and profile the well-known portraits of Henri le Grand. Of middle height, but seeming tall through his erect carriage, with broad chest, high shoulders, and lithe limbs, stood the Basque, motionless, and as if fixed, like a statue, to the ground. Their ample forehead, sharp prominent chin, their countenance and acute features mark the purity of this race, the most ancient perhaps and the most unmixed in France. Impassible and dignified, several Spaniards stood about; entombed in the vast folds of their weather-stained cloaks, their eyes turned to the grotto and their lips moving in undistracted prayer, they waited with a tranquillity that was almost sepulchral. Men of every profession, magistrates, shopkeepers, solicitors, barristers, physicians, were mingled with the crowd, while 'dames of high degree,' some in bonnets, some in veils, did not fear to encounter the chill air of that early morning in March.*

Many of the pilgrims, fatigued by their journey or by their night-watching, lay stretched upon the ground. There were young children sleeping angelic slumbers on the grass, wrapped up in their mother's *capulet*, perhaps innocently dreaming of the lovely Vision which at that selfsame spot had revealed itself to a little one not unlike themselves. Several people had clambered into the branches of the trees in their eagerness to see over the heads of those before them. Some there were under the rocks who had brought provisions for refreshment, and with pardonable foresight were catering for their creature comforts, while a troop of cavalry from Tarbes were on horseback at a respectful distance from this motley assemblage. The picturesque costumes of the people were illuminated by the rays of the rising sun as it lifted its glowing orb over the summit of Gers. It was a most striking scene when contemplated at a distance from the hills of Vizens: the *capulets* of the women, some snowy white, some fiery red, contrasting with the blue

* M. Henri Lasserre.

caps of the Béarnais, resembled a parterre of wild flowers —crimson poppies and pretty bluebells; while the burnished helmets of the dragoons sparkled like a glass house in the exultant beams of the new-born day. There were more than twenty thousand people at the moment I am describing assembled on the banks of the Gave.* The different sentiments of faith, or of doubt, or of curiosity, might be recognised alternating on the countenances of that various multitude in which all shades of society and of thought had representatives. Outside this crowd were the *gendarmerie* and military; the former were continually in movement, under the direction of their commander, who himself remained stationary. Jacomet and the local crown prosecutor had taken their position on a height in the vicinity, and were watching anxiously the proceedings with the latent hope that some disorder might arise which would authorise their interposition.

At last the accustomed cry was heard, 'Voilà la sainte!' ('The saint is coming!') and instinctively every head was uncovered. A path had been made to facilitate her approach a few days before by the confraternity of quarrymen who worked in that locality; and as she came along, accompanied by her mother, she seemed completely unconscious of the vast crowd that greeted her. Her mind was so entirely absorbed in the Vision which she expected to behold that she could not exhibit either vanity or awkwardness at the respect, amounting to veneration, with which she was received. The police advanced and respectfully made way for her through the dense mass, as if that miller's daughter were some royal princess. When Bernadette prostrated herself before the grotto, the multitude, with one simultaneous movement, also knelt down. There was universal silence around; no hum of voices

* This enumeration was made by several persons who were present. The picture of the crowd then assembled may strike some readers as imaginative; but its details are taken from a local journal which was strongly opposed to the story, *L'Ère impérial* of Tarbes, March 26, 1858. Five or six weeks later, the mayor had an enumeration taken of the numbers who had visited the grotto, on a particular day, April 6, and it was found to have been 9,060 persons.

stirred the tranquil air; no sound was heard save the gentle murmuring of the new-born fountain.

Almost immediately the transfigured countenance of the child was wrapped in ecstasy, and that supernatural radiance, which has been already described, lighting up her entire figure, revealed that she was in the presence of some celestial being. The Apparition again commanded her to drink, and to wash herself in the well, and to eat of the herbage, as before; and repeated the commission to go again to the priests, and to tell them that it was her wish that a chapel should be built on that spot, and that processions should commemorate the event. Bernadette again asked Her to tell her her name; but the Apparition made no answer to this request; the moment of its announcement had not yet come. The fortnight was over, the invited visits were at an end, and taking the arm of her aunt, she withdrew in loneliness and sadness of heart. But these visits and apparitions had produced a great result—the pilgrimage to Lourdes was established.

While Bernadette returned to her home, there was much discussion and many commentaries upon the events that had been witnessed during the past fortnight among that motley crowd as it unwillingly dispersed. The Apparition, addressing itself to a lowly child of earth, and through her probably to all mankind, had ordered Bernadette to leave the river's side, to climb up the rock into the remotest corner of the grotto, to drink the water, to eat the herb, and to wash herself in a fountain that as yet had no existence. She mounted the rugged ascent, she ate the herb, she implicitly obeyed the directions, and the stream burst forth and became a fountain of life, restoring health and vigour to the sick and dying. What did all this import?

What is the great evil of these our days? In the order of mind, is it not pride? In the order of morals, is it not ungovernable sensualism and love of the world? We live in an age when man has made a god of himself, and when the busy industry and prodigious activity which

surround us have for their chief if not their only object pleasure, and self-indulgence. In all his labours, in all his pursuits, nothing is sought but physical satisfaction and material amelioration, and all modern progress seems to place its highest end in the things of earth, as if Time was eternal. Religion and the Church are disdainfully contemned, or at best treated only with secondary consideration, although they alone possess the true secret of prosperity and happiness. May not that wonderful Apparition, that supernatural fountain, whose waters cured instantaneously the sick and infirm, have been sent by God, in order to arouse and convert many among that multitude, and through it a greater multitude outside and away?

If we seek a symbolical explanation of these wonderful occurrences, it will not be difficult for the thoughtful Christian to find in them abundant application and instruction; but I will leave that task to pens more competent than that of a simple layman like myself. If I were inclined to trespass upon such holy ground, it would be unwise in the presence of that beautiful book of reflections on our Lady of Lourdes, recently published by the Abbé Boyer, and which I recommend to my readers with all earnestness.* Nor will I stop for the present to detail the numerous miracles which were daily taking place, as if to impose silence upon the questions and conviction of the doubter. I pass over the sudden cure of Louis Bourriette, the recovery of the almost expiring child of Jean Bouhohorts, that of the deaf widow Crozet, the restoration of the innkeeper Blaise Maumus, that of the cripple Auguste Bordes, and innumerable others, to which I shall have occasion to refer at a later period of this narrative.

These events had caused much disturbance of mind among the incredulous as well as agitation and displeasure to the police and other functionaries. Their perplexities

* *Notre-Dame de Lourdes; ou Réflexions symboliques et morales sur les Apparitions de la Sainte Vierge à Bernadette Soubirous.* Par l'abbé Eugène Boyer. Bayonne, 1868.

sought a solution in the suggestion that Bernadette was insane, and that her proper place was an asylum. Is it not ever thus when the world judges?—God's wisdom is its folly.

The mysterious fortnight had ended, but Bernadette continued to visit the grotto, although she had ceased to feel the strong interior impulsion which had controlled her during that period. On the morning of March 25, her countenance once more beamed with joyful hope, and she felt again the inward conviction that she once more was about to behold the Apparition. The snow had melted in the valley, but still lay heavily upon the mountain tops; the weather was fine and clear, and there was not a cloud to shadow the azure firmament. It was the Feast of the Annunciation, that great day when the archangel Gabriel descended from heaven and addressed his memorable salutation to the blessed Maid of Nazareth.* The presentiment which Bernadette had felt was not deceived, for no sooner had she knelt down than the Apparition stood before her. As usual, an ineffable light, like that of the aurora, beamed around her; its splendour seemed inexhaustible, its loveliness infinite, like that of eternal glory. As usual, her veil and garments were snowy white, her girdle was blue as an Indian sky, and two tiny rosebuds shed sweet odours at her feet. Bernadette cried out in ecstasy, 'O Lady, have the goodness to tell me who you are and what is your name?'† The Apparition smiled, but did not answer. She might have addressed Her in the language used by the Church in her offices that morning, 'Holy and Immaculate Virgin! what praise can I give thee? In truth I know not; for thou hast borne, shut up in thy womb, Him whom the heavens could not contain.'‡ But this expressive language was unknown to the miller's

* *Breviarium Romanum*, 25 Martii, 1° Nocturne.

† 'O ma Dame, veuillez avoir la bonté de me dire qui vous êtes et quel est votre nom?'

‡ 'Sancta et immaculata Virginitas, quibus te laudibus efferam, nescio; quia quem cœli capere non poterant, tuo gremio contulisti.'—*Breviarium Romanum*, 25 Martii, 2° Nocturne.

ignorant daughter, and she spoke only that of her throbbing heart. Again she repeated her question, but again there was not any reply; and once more, for the third time, with increased earnestness and supplication, Bernadette asked to know the name and condition of the Vision.

The Apparition held its hands joined, as if in prayer, but upon this entreaty being urged for the third time, she unfolded them, passed her alabaster beads over her right arm, opened wide both her arms, and bending downwards, slowly said:—

'JE SUIS L'IMMACULÉE CONCEPTION.' ('I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.')

Having pronounced these words she vanished; the illumination passed away from the countenance of Bernadette, and she found herself as if alone in the midst of the crowd and in front of the deserted grotto. But the fountain was flowing, with its low, silver murmur at her side, and the church was intoning that magnificent hymn,

O Gloriosa Virginum,
Sublimis inter sidera!
Qui te creavit, parvulum
Lactente nutris ubere.

And in this apt combination of time and place was revealed the name and the purpose of that mysterious Apparition which had for so many days excited the wonder of the crowd, and which was to be seen but once more by that favoured child.

There is much to observe in that brief announcement of the Apparition; but one thing has especially attracted criticism. She did not say, 'I am Mary Immaculate;' her words were, 'I am the Immaculate Conception;' as if thereby she marked with an absolute character, and proclaimed by her own miraculous presence the truth of that great dogma which the Church so recently had declared to be an article of faith. This was the first time that Bernadette had heard the words 'Immaculate Conception,' and not comprehending their meaning, she made great

efforts, as she returned to Lourdes, to retain them in her memory.

'I kept repeating them to myself all along the road, lest I should lose them,' she once said to M. Lasserre, 'and as I went to the presbytery I was saying "Immaculate Conception! Immaculate Conception!" at every step I took, because I wanted to bring to the curé the very words of the Vision, in order that the chapel might be built.'*

It was this vision of Mary, announcing herself as the Immaculate Conception, that imprinted itself the most deeply on the memory of Bernadette. She sometimes would describe the scene to her friends, imitating with her hands, her head, and countenance the movements of the Virgin. In the simple action of lifting her hands and crossing them upon her breast there was so much nobleness, dignity, and grace; when she turned her face upward to heaven there was so divine an expression upon it that those who saw her on these occasions could not repress their admiration and respect. A man of the world who once witnessed her representation of the vision was so struck by it that he exclaimed:

'This is enough for me. I believe. I am convinced that this child has seen our Lady. She never could invent that which she has described to us. I have seen the most celebrated actors, and not one of them could have exhibited so much simplicity combined with so much grandeur. It is evident that what she has seen and imitates belongs to another world.'†

The civil authorities had become seriously uneasy at the hold which these events had taken of the public mind. M. Rouland was Minister of Public Instruction, and being

* '"Je les répétais en moi-même tout le long du chemin pour ne point les perdre," nous disait-elle un jour, "et jusqu'au presbytère où j'allais, je disais: *Immaculée Conception, Immaculée Conception*, à chaque pas que je faisais, parce que je voulais porter à M. le Curé les paroles de la Vision, afin que la chapelle se bâtît."'—*Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, p. 196.

† 'Pour moi ceci suffit. Je crois. Cette enfant a vu: elle ne pouvait jamais trouver seule ce qu'elle fait là. J'ai suivi les acteurs les plus célèbres, aucun n'aurait mis dans ce geste tant de simplicité et de grandeur ensemble. Ce qu'elle a vu est d'un autre monde.'—*Annales de Lourdes*, No. 9, p. 137.

unable to admit for a single instant that there could be any truth in the visions and miracles attributed to the grotto and fountain near Lourdes, he addressed the following letter to M. Massy, the prefect, bearing date April 12, 1858:—

'M. le Préfet,—I have examined the two reports which you have addressed to me on the 12th and 26th of March respectively, regarding a pretended apparition of the Virgin, said to have taken place at a grotto in the neighbourhood of the city of Lourdes. It is important, in my opinion, that an end should be put to acts which may compromise the true interests of Catholicism and weaken religious feeling in the people. No one has the right to establish an oratory or place for public worship without the double authorisation of the civil and ecclesiastical powers. Therefore, according to strict principles, we should be justified in closing up the grotto immediately, inasmuch as it has been transformed into a kind of chapel. But some danger might arise if we were to exercise this power injudiciously (*brusquement*). It will be enough if you prevent this visionary young girl from going to the grotto, and take measures gradually to divert the attention of the public and diminish their visits. It is unnecessary for me, M. le Préfet, at this moment to give you more precise instructions. This is a matter which, above everything, requires tact, prudence, and firmness, and in these respects any recommendation from me to you is unnecessary. It is, moreover, indispensable that your measures shall be taken in concert with the clergy, and I cannot too much urge you to consult upon this delicate business directly with Mgr. the Bishop of Tarbes, and I authorise you to tell him, in my name, that it is my opinion that too free a course should not be allowed to a state of things which cannot fail to serve as a pretext for new attacks upon the clergy and religion.'

We have seen that Mgr. Laurence was still in doubt as to the judgment he should pronounce upon the occurrences at Massabielle. He had not visited the spot, he had not

witnessed any of the miracles; and the reports he had received of them were from parties who had gathered their information at second-hand from others, so that he was unable to form a positive opinion, and reserved his decision for further examination and proof. He felt, however, that a formal prohibition upon his part to Bernadette to visit the grotto would attack the most sacred liberty of her mind, which he was bound to respect. But he had not the same objection to employ the language of advice, and he directed the Curé of Lourdes to use his gentle influence with her to dissuade her from continuing these visits. The bishop, with his quick discernment, saw through the mind of the astute minister, and it was evident to him that ulterior measures, perhaps even the use of the public force, were in contemplation. He desired, as much as in him lay, to obviate such a scandal.

Easter Sunday had come. Notwithstanding the apprehensions of the Minister of Public Worship, the popular sentiment for religion had not been weakened by the wonders performed at Massabielle. Many conversions from sin had taken place; the confessionals were besieged from morning until night; the faithful thronged round the holy table; usurers and thieves made restitution, and certain scandals ceased to disedify the community, while the affluence of pilgrims daily increased.

On Easter Monday, April 5, the day on which the prefect, in obedience to the letter of the minister, had an interview with the bishop, the miller's daughter, moved by an irresistible inspiration, went to the grotto. Once more the heavens opened before her, and permitted her to gaze upon the Virgin Mary in all her glory. An extraordinary incident occurred upon this occasion.

The taper or wax candle which Bernadette had brought with her was very large, and when she knelt down she placed it near her upon the ground, having her fingers close to the end to support it. When, on beholding the blessed Virgin, she fell into ecstasy, she gradually advanced her fingers until they touched the flame of the

burning candle. The flame was seen to pass through her half-open fingers and play about them as the breeze fanned it hither and thither. The crowd looked on in amazement; but Bernadette remained motionless, and seemed insensible to all external feeling. The people pressed forward that they might see more closely the incident. More than one hundred persons witnessed this unexampled event; among them was Dr. Dozous, who certified by his watch that her fingers remained enveloped in the flame, as if burning, for a space of more than a quarter of an hour. When the Vision had vanished, and her ecstasy was over, she regained her normal condition; nor did her fingers exhibit any mark of injury. One of the spectators, desirous to test the matter, took the taper, which was still burning, and without being perceived by her, applied it to her hand, when she turned round in a fright and cried out, 'You are burning me, sir!' ('Oh! monsieur, vous me brûlez'). There were nearly ten thousand persons at the grotto on that day.*

The old pathway from Lourdes had been enlarged and improved, but not by the administration. It was the pious custom of certain quarrymen of the vicinity to devote an hour, after their day's work, to this good purpose, and in a little time a suitable road was constructed by the gratuitous toil of these devout labourers. The grotto also, by degrees, had assumed a new aspect. Hitherto pious offerings had been limited to wax candles and tapers, which were continually burning before the niche, but now the faithful began to place flower vases, statuettes of the Virgin, and various *ex-votos*, in testimony of their devotion. Several persons who had received especial graces through the intercession of our Lady of Lourdes, offered gold crosses and chains, which lay exposed without other protection than that of the public

* The mayor sent his agents to the different roads and approaches to the grotto to take the census of the visitors on that day. According to the report made up for him that evening, there had been 9,060 persons present:—4,822 inhabitants of Lourdes and 4,238 strangers. See *Les Archives de la Mairie de Lourdes.*

piety, in obedience to which the confraternity of carpenters made a small balustrade before the grotto to keep off the crowd. It was now generally understood that the directions of the Apparition should be obeyed, and a chapel built, and with this feeling it became the custom to throw pieces of money into the grotto as voluntary contributions, by which, it was hoped, an important sum might be realised. This custom still prevailed at the period of my visits, and it was curious to see the floor of the cavern strewed with coins of every value. Considerable sums, amounting to thousands of francs, were left scattered about through the night as well as the day, and such was the respect inspired by the place that not a single coin was ever abstracted. At present there is a large grating and gate in front of the grotto which protect the offerings that are continually flung at the feet of the statue that has been placed in the venerated niche.

Bernadette had now become the object of frequent visits from strangers brought by piety or by curiosity to Lourdes. No one who heard her story from her own lips deemed it either an invention or a fraud, and while discussions on the subject were warm and constant, everyone who listened to her was filled with reverence, if not with conviction. Although possessed only of the most ordinary intelligence upon all other things, she was eloquent and clever when she spoke of the Apparition, and her replies to those who sought to puzzle her always were appropriate and ready. M. de Rességuier, counsellor of the Courts at Pau, said to her one day, among other things:

'Was the Vision as handsome as these ladies you see here?'

Having examined them for a short time (and they were such in beauty and in fashion as might well have attracted a peasant girl's admiration), she said, with a slight movement of disdain:

'It was a very different thing from all these.' ('Oh! c'était bien autre chose que tout cela!')

'Tout cela' was the *élite* of the first circles of Pau!

Bernadette continued to attend the schools of the nuns as she had previously done. There was much difficulty in teaching her to read and write, and she considered herself to be the greatest dunce in the school. She joined willingly in the infantine sports of her companions; hide-and-go-seek, skip-rope, and other such amusements of children. The Mother of God, in selecting Bernadette as a witness to the supernatural, and thus rendering her an object of curiosity and veneration to thousands, enabled her to preserve her childlike simplicity and innocence in all their freshness.

The news having got circulation that the Apparition had told its name to Bernadette, it seemed to the prefect that a favourable opportunity had opened, and that the time for action was come. Accordingly he sent a Commission, composed of two physicians, to her father's house, with instructions to examine her as to her sanity. These learned doctors, one of whom was the particular friend of the *Procureur impérial*, or Crown Prosecutor, exhausted themselves during three weeks in the most profound study and investigations. But, after a close examination, they could not certify that they had discovered any mental or cerebral defect in Bernadette; and, having regard to their professional character, they could not venture further than to say that possibly she might be subject to hallucinations ('Elle pourrait bien être hallucinée'). This, however, was sufficient for the prefect, and in virtue of the law of June 30, 1838, he resolved to have Bernadette arrested, placed provisionally in the hospital at Tarbes, and thence transferred in due time to the lunatic asylum. It would not be enough to strike down the child; a barrier must be opposed to the increasing movement among the people, and, as M. Rouland had insinuated in his letter to the prefect, that might be done under cover of strict legality. He had only to shut up the grotto as an unprivileged chapel, and carry away the offerings and *ex-votos*. A squadron of dragoons would be held in readiness at Tarbes, in case of any opposition on the part of the people.

'The prefect,' says an illustrious writer, speaking of these proceedings, 'had imposed that day upon his officials a very difficult task, inaugurated in a very revolting fashion. He might have comprehended, if he so desired, that some freedom in our sources of consolation is necessary to compensate for the sacrifices which society imposes. The liberty to pray in certain places, to burn a taper before an image, to taste a drop of water from a certain fountain, to deposit an offering on an altar, cannot be very onerous to the State nor fatal to public order; nor can it offend the privileges or the delicacy of anyone. And yet in all these things there is deep consolation for those who believe and practise them. Do, then, let faith have a little life. In the midst of your occupations, with your power, with your wealth, do remember that the great mass of those whom you govern has need to ask its daily bread from God, and often obtains it only by a kind of miracle. To have faith is almost to have food. It helps us to digest our stale black morsel, and when even that fails, it helps us to have patience. And when God vouchsafes to open to us one of these sacred depositories whence grace flows with more abundance, and faith grows more energetic, do not endeavour to close it. You yourselves are the first who may find its utility. It will enable you to make reductions in your budget, and dispense with your prisons and hospitals.'*

But these were not the sentiments of Baron Massy. The period for the meeting of the Council of Revision had come round, and thus gave to the prefect the opportunity of consulting the assembled mayors of the canton upon what he was pleased to consider the crisis. He explained to them officially that the scenes which had been witnessed at Massabielle—the gathering of the people and the allegation of supernatural visions—were unfavourable to religion and dangerous to good order; and he impressed upon them that the fact of the erection of an oratory at the grotto was proved by the offerings made and the

* Louis Veuillot, *L'Univers*, August 18, 1858.

tapers constantly burning before it, that this was a violation of the law and an inroad upon authority, ecclesiastical and civil, which should be repressed with vigour. He proceeded to inform them that he had instructed the commissary of police to bring away and transport to the mayoralty all the offerings that had been deposited at the grotto, and that he would cause to be arrested and treated as insane all visionary persons who should propagate absurd and improbable fictions.

This was on May 2, and this was the invocation with which M. Massy inaugurated his devotions for 'le mois de Marie.' The mayor and the commissary of police received orders to execute these instructions forthwith. The mayor, M. Lacadé, who had not been insensible to the prodigies that were passing under his eyes, felt regret at finding himself and his convictions placed in some perplexity by this order. He felt also some apprehension as to the attitude which the people might assume in the matter; and, consulting M. Dutour, the crown prosecutor, they determined to advise with the curé. Accordingly they called upon the Abbé Peyramale, explained to him their instructions, with the assurance that the prefect was acting within the strict limits of the law.

The good priest could not repress his indignation at the cruel iniquity of such law, and cried out:

'This child is innocent, and the proof of it is that you, the crown prosecutor, in spite of all kinds of cross-questioning, have not been able to find the least pretext, as a magistrate, for her prosecution. You know that there is not a tribunal in France which would not recognise her innocence to be as clear as the sun, and that there is not a crown prosecutor who would not declare that there is no ground for an action against her, and that to arrest her would be monstrous.'

'But the authorities are not bringing any prosecution against her,' replied M. Dutour. 'The prefect, upon the report of the physicians, will cause her to be shut up as being slightly deranged, and this will be for her own

interest, that she may be cured. It is simply an administrative menace which does not touch religion, because neither the bishop nor the clergy have pronounced any opinion upon these transactions.'

'Such a menace,' replied the priest, becoming more and more animated, 'would be the most odious persecution; the more odious because it assumes the mask of hypocrisy. Under the mantle of the law it affects to protect while it intends to crush a poor helpless young creature. Although the bishop and the clergy, including myself, prudently await some further manifestation before we pronounce definitively our judgment, we have seen sufficient to justify our opinion as to the good faith of Bernadette and the soundness of her faculties and intellect. Inasmuch as your physicians have failed to detect any mental defect, how far are they more competent to judge of her good sense or foolishness than the thousand visitors who have interrogated her, and all of whom have acknowledged themselves astonished by the lucidity of her answers and the steadiness of her intelligence? These very doctors themselves have not ventured to affirm the contrary, and have been obliged to conclude their report by a lame hypothesis. There are no grounds upon which the prefect can order the arrest of Bernadette.'

'But it is legal' ('C'est légal').

'It is unlawful (*illégitime*). As pastor of the city of Lourdes, I belong to all, but especially to the weak. If I were to see an armed man attack a child, I would defend the child at the peril of my life, for I know the duty that is imposed upon the good shepherd. Be assured that I would do the same if that man happened to be the prefect, and that he was even armed with the bad clauses of a bad law. Go, then, and tell the prefect that his *gendarmes* will find me on the threshold of the door, and that they shall pass over my body and trample me under foot before they shall touch a hair of the head of this little girl.'

'However' ('Cependant')——

'There is no "however." You are free to examine and make full enquiry; that is the wish of everyone. But if, instead of doing this, your intention is to persecute and strike the innocent, be assured that before you can hurt the smallest and least among my flock, you must begin with myself.'

This is noble language on the part of a great priest, which deserves unlimited admiration. As he spoke, his lofty stature, his fine head, and his marked features expressed a spirit of resolution and emotion that forbade remonstrance or reply.

'As to the grotto,' continued the priest, 'if the prefect, in the name of the law and of his own personal piety, thinks right to despoil it of the offerings which countless visitors have deposited in honour of the blessed Virgin, let him do so. He will sadden and offend all believers; but he may be reassured as to the disposition of the inhabitants, for they have been taught to respect authority even when mistaken. It is said that at Tarbes a squadron of dragoons is already in the saddle, waiting the orders of the prefect. Let them dismount. However warm may be their heads, and however wounded may be their hearts, my people will listen to my voice, and I will answer for their tranquillity without the aid of the military. In presence of an armed force my responsibility ceases.'

The energetic attitude taken by the Abbé Peyramale, who, it was well known, could not be diverted from what he considered to be his duty, introduced a new element into the difficulties which embarrassed the authorities. The mayor reported his interview to the prefect, and added, that although he should be obliged to resign his office in consequence, he must decline to be the party to enforce these orders, and reminded his superior that the police were under his direct control, and he might himself command her arrest.

While the fate and liberty of poor Bernadette seemed thus in the balance, our old acquaintance Jacomet was taking measures to execute the orders of Baron Massy

regarding the grotto. The rumour that the prefect had issued orders to despoil the grotto of the gifts of the faithful spread rapidly, and caused much agitation throughout the town. In their consternation, the entire people looked upon it as a monstrous sacrilege. 'The most blessed Virgin has deigned to descend amongst us,' they said, 'and this is the way in which she is received. It is enough to bring down upon us the anger of God.' Those who had been the coldest shared the general ferment, and a growing effervescence animated the masses. The curé and his vicaires went amongst them, exhorting them to preserve quiet and calm their irritation.

'My friends,' said the priest, 'do not compromise your cause by any disorder; yield to the laws, although iniquitous. If the blessed Virgin is really concerned ('si la Sainte Vierge est en tout cela'), she will turn all this to her glory; any violence on your part would be an injury to her power and an evidence of your want of faith in it. The martyrs did not revolt against their persecutors, and yet they triumphed, although they did not fight.'

We have seen that the influence of the curé was all-powerful with his flock; yet it was difficult for him now to calm those excited heads and outraged hearts.

The offerings and *ex-votos* had accumulated to such an amount that it was impossible to remove them without a cart. Jacomet went to M. Bariosse, the postmaster, to hire a cart and horses for the purpose.

'I do not let my horses for such things,' replied the postmaster.

'But you cannot refuse your horses to anyone who will pay,' retorted Jacomet.

'My horses are intended for the service of the post, and not for this kind of business,' rejoined Bariosse. 'I do not wish to have anything to do in the act which you are going to commit. Bring an action against me, if that suits you; but I refuse my horses.'

Thus baffled, the commissary went to several other places, for, being the passage to many of the Pyrenean

watering-places, Lourdes abounds with public vehicles and horses of all kinds; but he met the same refusal everywhere, from private as well as from public individuals. The populace followed him from house to house with jeers and execrations. At last, he offered thirty francs to anyone who would do the job; the people immediately recollected that thirty pieces of silver was the price of the direst treachery that ever darkened the human heart, and they heaped their reproaches tenfold upon the head of the perplexed Jacomet. At last he found the daughter of a smith who, for that historic sum, was induced to let her cart. When the multitude saw that he had procured the cart, their indignation against the person who had given it was very loud, the more so as she was well off in her circumstances, while many indigent persons had refused the bribe. Jacomet proceeded towards the grotto, and the police led the horse and cart, followed by an immense crowd, silent, sombre, unquiet, as if brooding a terrible outbreak. Arrived at the rocks of Massabielle, they had to leave the cart at some distance, as the passage did not permit the approach of vehicles. Under the vault of the grotto numerous wax candles were burning, placed in chandeliers adorned with ribbons and green moss. Crucifixes, statuettes of the Virgin, devotional pictures, rosaries, beads, necklaces, jewels, lay scattered on the ground or in the nooks of the rock. Bits of carpeting in some places were spread under the images of our Lady; pious hands had brought innumerable bouquets, and this rustic sanctuary was perfumed by the fresh garlands of the floral month of May. There were several thousand francs, in silver and copper, lying on the floor, upon which no thief had ever dared to place his sacrilegious hand, notwithstanding the facility for a midnight depredation presented by the unguarded loneliness of the spot. This crime was reserved for the myrmidons of the government.

Jacomet stepped over the balustrade, which had been constructed by the confraternity of carpenters, and entered the grotto. He seemed somewhat confused at his own

temerity. The *sergents-de-ville* were at his back; the crowd that had followed him looked on, without tumult, but there was something ominous in their repose. The commissary began his work by making sure of the money. He then extinguished the tapers one by one, collected the beads, crosses, and other valuables with which the grotto was filled, and handed them to the constables to carry to the cart. These men seemed to perform their share of the business with sulky reluctance. As the cart was at some distance, a good deal of time was necessary for this part of the proceedings. In his hurry, the commissary called a little boy, and told him to carry one of the pious pictures to the cart, but, as the child unconsciously stretched out his hand to take it, another little boy near him cried out, 'Wretched fellow! what are you going to do? God will punish you,'* and he instantly drew back. The commissary now was evidently alarmed; there was something convulsive in his movements. When he picked up the first bouquet, thinking that it was of no value, he was about to throw it into the Gave, until an indistinct murmur through the people warned him how little was needed to provoke their outburst, and he placed the bouquet, with the other articles, in the cart. Shortly after a statuette fell to pieces in the hands of the commissary, and this little incident produced a threatening movement in the crowd. When the grotto had been thoroughly despoiled, Jacomet proceeded to remove the balustrade; for this a hatchet was necessary. He applied to several people who were working at a saw-mill in the neighbourhood, but they successively refused to lend it, until some one, more timid or less religious than the rest, was found to comply. Jacomet himself was obliged to do the work, and with a few strokes he demolished the frail barrier. This act of violence seemed to have had more effect upon the crowd than all that had preceded, and there was an explosion of menacing anger throughout its ranks. The Gave was near, and one word would have sufficed to precipitate the

* 'Malheureux! que vas-tu faire? Le bon Dieu te punirait.'

unfortunate commissary into its waters. Jacomet felt this; he grew pale and agitated, and, turning round, said in a deprecatory tone: 'That which I am doing is not of my own accord. It is with great regret that I find myself engaged upon this duty. I am acting under the orders of the prefect, and, at whatever cost, I must obey superior authority. I am not responsible, and it is not fair to blame me.' Hereupon some voices in the crowd cried out:

'Let us remain quiet; no violence. Let us leave all in the hands of God.'* The advice and exertions of the clergy had borne their fruit, and there was no breach of the peace. The commissary and his bailiffs did not meet with any obstacle on their road with the cart to the mayoralty, where they deposited the things which they had found at the grotto; the money they placed in the hands of the mayor himself. As a protest against the measures of the prefect, an immense crowd assembled in the evening at the grotto, and decorated it profusely with flowers and garlands; and as every person bore a lighted taper, a brilliant illumination irradiated the desecrated sanctuary. The next day two events took place, which did not fail to produce great impression upon the people. The girl who had let a cart to Jacomet fell from the top of a hayloft and broke her ribs. On the same day, the man who had lent his hatchet had both his legs smashed by the fall of a heavy plank, which he was endeavouring to place upon his work-bench. These accidents may have been fortuitous, but the coincidence is remarkable. The freethinkers regarded them as irritating and unfortunate, but the people received them as the manifest judgment of God.

Consequent upon these proceedings, a prohibition to

* 'Ce que je fais, dit-il avec une apparente tristesse, je ne le fais pas de moi-même, et c'est avec le plus grand regret que je me vois forcé de l'exécuter. J'agis d'après les ordres de M. le Préfet. Il faut que j'obéisse, quoi qu'il m'en coûte, à l'autorité supérieure. Je ne suis point responsable, et il ne faut pas s'en prendre à moi. Des voix dans la foule s'écrièrent: "Demeurons calmes; pas de violence. Laissons tout à la main de Dieu."'

the public to enter the precincts of Massabielle was issued, and a board was placed before the grotto, having on it the words: 'Défense d'entrer sur cette propriété' ('All trespass upon these grounds prohibited'). The police were active in enforcing this prohibition, and several persons were brought before the courts and fined for its infraction. Notwithstanding official vigilance, the zeal of the people continually eluded the strictness of authority and frustrated its prosecutions. Some poor labouring women were condemned by the tribunals for circulation of false intelligence, by speaking of the Apparition; but this sentence was reversed by the court of appeal at Pau, and the decision was regarded by the people as a triumph of right. A feeling of excessive irritation had been created among them by these vexatious measures, and they were restrained from an outbreak solely by the influence of the curé and his priests. The arrival of pilgrims was not checked to any perceptible degree; and when prevented from entering the neighbourhood of the grotto, they used to assemble at the opposite side of the Gave, and kneeling often on the half-dried bed of the river, offer up their prayers with unabated fervour and faith.

Upon more than one occasion persons of high distinction disputed the orders of the police, and to their embarrassment stepped over the barrier and defied their interdict. One day they arrested, rather rudely, a stranger with a strongly marked countenance, who approached the barrier with the evident intention of crossing it and passing on to the rocks.

'You can't pass' ('On ne passe pas'), said the constable.

'You shall see whether I can pass or not,' warmly replied the unknown, and entered upon the forbidden ground, without paying further attention to the inhibition.

'Your name?' called out the constable, 'that I may direct a prosecution' ('Que je vous dresse procès-verbal').

'I am called' ('Je me nomme') 'Louis Veuillot,' answered the stranger.

While the authorities were engaged drawing up the plaint against this distinguished writer and publicist, a lady had passed the limits and had knelt down before the grotto. No sooner had the policeman beheld this second infraction, than he quitted Veuillot and hastened towards the fair intruder, saying:

'Madame, it is forbidden to pray here. You are caught in the act—*flagrante delicto*. In the name of the law I arrest you. Your name?'

'I will tell you very willingly,' replied the lady; 'I am Madame Bruat, wife of the admiral, and governess of his Royal Highness the Prince Imperial.'

The terrible Jacomet, whose respect for those placed in high position was profound, bent humbly before her, and countermanded the summons prepared against the distinguished lady, who extended her mantle to the no less distinguished journalist, and protected him from further inconvenience.

Monseigneur de Salinis, Archbishop of Auch; Mgr. Thibaud, Bishop of Montpellier; Mgr. de Garsignies, Bishop of Soissons, besides many laics of high distinction, visited the grotto during this period. It is recorded that one of the most venerated prelates of France could not restrain his tears on listening to the simple but convincing recital of Bernadette. Contemplating that little child, on whose brow the ineffable Mother of God had left her impression, he could not master his emotion, and he knelt down before her—a prince of the Church before a lowly peasant girl—and in a voice that trembled, said:

'Pray for me; bless me and my flock' ('Priez pour moi; bénissez-moi et mon troupeau').

In the meantime, and in unpardonable disregard of police regulations, the fountain continued to flow and numerous cures to be effected miraculously through the agency of its waters. While Jacomet and his satellites persisted in keeping watch day and night, and dragging the devout trespassers before the court, the magistrate, Dupret, was always ready to convict and punish. At last,

Mgr. Salinis and M. Ressèguier undertook to represent to the Emperor, who was then at Biarritz, the circumstances and position of the case. At the same time petitions were presented to his Majesty from all sides, protesting against the prohibition, and praying protection from the violence of Baron Massy and his functionaries.

'Sire,' said one of these petitions, 'we do not pretend to decide in any way upon the truth of the apparitions of the Virgin, although, upon the faith of astounding miracles witnessed by their own eyes, almost the entire people of this country credit the reality of these supernatural manifestations. That which is certain and beyond all dispute, is that the spring (*source*) which arose, suddenly, and which in spite of the scientific analysis which has declared it to be innocuous, is now closed to us, has not produced injury to anyone, while a great many affirm that they have recovered their health through its means. In the name of the rights of conscience, which are independent of all human power, let those who believe go there to pray if they like it. In the name of common humanity, let the sick go there to get cured, if such is their hope. In the name of liberty of thought, let those who seek information through enquiry on the spot go there and discover the fraud if it be one, or find out the truth and proclaim it.'

This was the first time that the Emperor had heard all the circumstances in their full detail from competent and trustworthy informants. He rapidly arrived at a decision with his usual perspicuity. On learning the absurd measures by which the prefect and his agents were bringing authority into discredit, his stern eye is said to have flashed with a ray of anger; he shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and a cloud of profound displeasure passed over his brow. He rang the bell violently, and said to the servant, 'Take this to the telegraph.' It was a laconic message for the prefect at Tarbes, ordering, on the part of the Emperor, the withdrawal of the decree concerning the grotto near Lourdes, and giving liberty to

the people to visit it as heretofore. There was some hesitation as well as surprise on the part of Baron Massy in executing this order, and he affected to think that there must have been some misapprehension. This idea was soon removed by a visit from M. Fould, then minister, and a second message, more imperative than the first, which he could not venture longer to disregard. The news had oozed out among the people that a despatch had come from the Emperor, but its precise import was left to conjecture until they read upon the walls of Lourdes the following notice:—

Le Maire de la ville de Lourdes,
Vu les instructions à lui adressées,
ARRÊTE:
'L'arrêté pris par lui le 8 juin 1858 est rapporté.
Fait à Lourdes en l'hôtel de la Mairie, le 5 octobre 1858.
Le Maire. A. LACADÉ.

Jacomet and his myrmidons were despatched at the same time to the grotto with an order to remove the barriers and take down the prohibitory notice. The people quickly thronged the sacred spot, once more opened to their piety, and were overwhelmed with joyful gratitude. Women knelt down and said the Rosary, young girls scattered flowers and wove garlands, but no one would lay a hand to the barriers. They left that work to the police who had erected them. It was clear, after this result, that Baron Massy was no longer the 'right man in the right place.' He was transferred to Grenoble, and thus by a strange casualty he left our Lady of Lourdes to cover with his protection our Lady of La Salette. Jacomet also was sent to another department, where he had ample opportunity to develope his capacity as chief of police, for which he was well suited. The crown prosecutor, M. Dutour, likewise was found to be misplaced, and he was promoted to higher functions elsewhere. The mayor, M. Lacadé, was the only official engaged in the prosecution of Bernadette who was allowed to retain his position.

It needs not to be told how sad and afflicted (oh! quam tristis et afflicta!) was the heart of Bernadette during this dreary interval. But the malice of the prefect, supported by the subserviency of medical science, was unable to establish any ground for the exercise of his power over her, and he was constrained to leave her as unshackled in person as she was sane in mind. Neither had her patroness deserted her; and during this same period of trial it was once more permitted to her to gaze upon that ravishing Vision. This time, however, there was no crowd to witness and bear testimony to her ecstasy. She enjoyed the privilege, upon this the last as upon the first occasion, almost alone and in solitude.

It was the evening of July 16, the Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, when Bernadette felt again within her that mysterious attraction which formerly summoned her to these divine interviews at the grotto. She mentioned it to her family, and a young aunt of hers offered to accompany her. Her aunt informed two other persons of Lourdes who had expressed a strong desire to follow Bernadette, with the hope of seeing her in ecstasy, and all four set off together. The grotto at this time was closed to the public, and to Bernadette more than to any other person it was forbidden ground. They therefore went through the meadows of La Ribère, which border the opposite bank of the Gave. They knelt down in front of the grotto, at some distance from a group of persons who were praying, and said an *Ave Maria* on their beads. It was twilight.

The clasped hands of Bernadette suddenly opened and dropped downwards, as if under the action of a surprise. Her companions at once recognised that she was in ecstasy, and by the waning daylight they could discover her face grow pale and her eyes brighten. At that moment a woman came up, and, ignorant of what was occurring, knelt down near Bernadette. The glare of the taper which she carried was dimmed by the lustre of Bernadette's transfigured countenance. For one instant only could her

aunt contemplate that radiant pallor—that halo of beatitude which clothed her visage, absorbed in gazing upon the glorious beauty of that divine Apparition. The two companions looked at her in wondering silence; while the privileged child, forgetting earth, seemed inebriated by the torrent which flowed from Paradise, and lost in the entrancing vision which Mary presented to her for the eighteenth time. The ecstasy lasted for a quarter of an hour, and Bernadette bade her last farewell to her celestial visitor. When she spoke of this vision, she seemed impressed with unutterable happiness. At the first moment of its appearance, everything around her changed its aspect; the Gave and the barriers no longer seemed to separate her; she seemed again to be at the foot of the rocks, and before her stood the same sweet Lady, with her white garment and veil, her blue girdle, the bright aureole round her head, and her soft smile and gentle look. Only she seemed more beautiful than ever, and the light that enveloped her was more intense.

This apparition would seem to have been designed alone for the consolation of the child, and therefore it did not become much known nor spoken of among the people. One would almost venture to say that it was right that it should have been so. Bernadette, poor and timid, had fulfilled her mission with a simplicity full of courage, and a devotedness unsubdued by trial. She had fought and suffered for the Lady of the Grotto, and she yet would have to fight and suffer in her cause. But this unexpected visit testified that She was satisfied with her, and recompensed her for the past, while it justified her for the future.

It was no undesigned accident that induced the blessed Virgin to select the Feast of Mount Carmel for her farewell apparition. The characters of that commemoration are not without similitude in the mysteries of Massabielle, and it would look as if Mary desired to associate the devotion of the mountain of Carmel with that of the hills of Lourdes. She would seem to place side by side, at remote intervals of place and time, the holy monk who received the scapular

from our Lady of Mount Carmel and the lowly child who, in the name of our Lady of Lourdes, drew forth the miraculous fountain, and proclaimed to mankind those words so full of hope and joy: '*Je suis l'Immaculée Conception.*' And herein is presented a new subject of meditation on the symbolism of these apparitions, which unfolds to the 'eyes of the enlightened heart' (Ephes. i. 18) a large and brilliant horizon, on which, however, I dare not further dwell.*

And now we must retrace our steps from that date in October, when the sagacity of the Emperor reopened the grotto at Lourdes, to the preceding month of July, when, personally impressed by the events which had occurred, and by the faith of the multitude, the prudent Bishop of Tarbes felt that the time had arrived when some action should be taken by the ecclesiastical authorities. Accordingly, on that date he issued the following most important 'mandement':—

'Ordinance of Monseigneur the Bishop of Tarbes, constituting a Commission charged with examining the authenticity and nature of the events that have occurred, during six months, consequent upon the apparition, whether true or false, of the most blessed Virgin in a grotto situated at the west of the city of Lourdes.

'BERTRAND-SÉVÈRE-LAURENCE, by the divine mercy and favour of the Holy Apostolic See Bishop of Tarbes, to the clergy and faithful of our diocese, health and benediction in our Lord Jesus Christ.

'Facts of great gravity relating to religion have taken place at Lourdes since the 11th of last February. They have disturbed this diocese and have been rumoured at a distance. Bernadette Soubirous, a young girl of Lourdes, fourteen years of age, is said to have had visions in the grotto of Massabielle, situated to the west of that city. The Immaculate Virgin is said to have appeared to her; a fountain is said to have burst forth; the water of this fountain, either taken internally or used externally, is said

* *Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, tom. i. p. 161.

to have operated numerous cures; these cures have been reputed miraculous; people in great crowds, from neighbouring dioceses as well as from our own, have sought at this fountain the cure of their infirmities—through the invocation of Mary Immaculate. The attention of the civil authority has been attracted by these things. On every side, since the month of March last, it has been demanded that ecclesiastical authority should declare itself respecting this unwonted pilgrimage.

'We thought at first that the time had not yet come for us to occupy ourselves advantageously with this matter, that in order to be able to pronounce such a judgment as may be expected from us, we should proceed slowly, distrust the enthusiasm of the first moments, give time to men's minds to grow calm and to reflect, and await the light of attentive and instructed observation.

'Three classes of persons have appealed to our decision, but each with different views. First, there are those who, refusing all examination, see nothing in the events at the grotto and in the cures attributed to the waters of the fountain but superstition, trickery, and fraud. It is evident that we cannot adopt the opinion of such persons *à priori* or without serious examination. Their journals at once raised the cry of superstition, imposture, and bad faith; they affirmed that the occurrences at the grotto had their origin in sordid interest and culpable cupidity, and thus have wounded the moral sense of our Christian population. To deny everything, to throw suspicion on the best intentions, is, we allow, a very easy way to get rid of difficulties. The denial of all supernatural action is but the revival of a superannuated school, which would end in the abjuration of the Christian religion, and lead men to follow in the wheel-ruts of the infidel philosophy of the last century. We Catholics cannot take counsel with those who deny to the Almighty the power of exceptional interference with the general laws which He has established for the government of the world—the work of his own hands; nor can we enter into discussion with

them upon the supernatural character of particular facts, inasmuch as beforehand they proclaim the impossibility of the supernatural altogether. Does this mean that we refuse a full, sincere, conscientious, and enlightened discussion of these events? Certainly not. We desire it with all our energy. We wish that these events should be submitted to the severest rules of examination which sound philosophy admits; and in order to pronounce whether these occurrences are supernatural and divine, we desire that men specially versed in the science of mystic theology, of medicine, physics, chemistry, and geology, shall be summoned to their investigation; and we desire, in order to ascertain the truth, that no means of science and learning shall be omitted.

'There is a second class of persons who neither approve nor disapprove the facts recounted, and who hold their judgment in suspense. Before deciding for themselves they desire to learn the opinion of competent authority, and ask for it earnestly. There is still a third class, who are very numerous, and who await with impatience the episcopal judgment. Although they hope for a decision favourable to their own pious views, we are well aware of their submission to the Church, and feel sure that they will bow to our judgment, whatever it may be, when once it has been pronounced.

'It is, therefore, in order to enlighten the piety of so many thousands of the faithful, to respond to a public need to decide doubts ("fixer des incertitudes"), and to calm men's minds, that we yield at last to entreaties which have been addressed to us during a long time from all sides. We invoke light upon facts which interest in the highest degree the worship due to Mary and religion itself. For this purpose we have determined to institute a permanent Commission, empowered to collect and certify the occurrences which have taken place, or which may take place, at the grotto of Lourdes; to report them to us, to specify their character, and to furnish us with the elements indispensable for a solution. Invoking for this

cause the holy name of God, we have constituted and do constitute as follows:—

'Art. 1. A Commission is instituted in the diocese of Tarbes to enquire, first, if any cures have been operated by the use of the water of the grotto of Lourdes by drinking or by washing with it, and whether such cures can be explained naturally or must be attributed to a supernatural cause?

'Secondly. If the visions which the child Bernadette Soubirous reports that she has seen in the grotto are real, and in that case, whether they can be explained naturally, or possess a character supernatural and divine?

'Thirdly. If the Apparition ("l'objet apparu") has made any demand or manifested any wish to the child? Whether she has been charged to communicate any such wishes? to whom? and what were the demands or wishes so expressed?

'Fourthly. If the fountain which now flows in the grotto existed prior to the visions which Bernadette Soubirous pretends to have had?

'Art. 2. The Commission shall report to us only such facts as have been established by solid proofs, and shall address to us a circumstantial report, with the expression of its own opinion thereon.

'Art. 3. The deans of the diocese will be the principal correspondents of the Commission. They are requested to inform it of any events which may have occurred in their respective deaneries; to furnish the names of the persons who can give evidence as to these events; of any persons who may be able to assist the Commission by their knowledge; of the physicians who attended the sick that have been cured previous to their cure.

'Art. 4. Having taken the necessary preparatory steps, the Commission shall proceed to the enquiry. All witnesses shall be examined upon oath. When it is necessary to examine into a case upon the spot, two members at least of the Commission shall go thither for that purpose.

'Art. 5. We recommend earnestly to the Commission to

seek the assistance of men eminent in the sciences of medicine, physics, chemistry, geology, &c., that the difficulties may be discussed and their opinions recorded, so that the Commission may neglect nothing that shall enable them to ascertain the truth, whatever it may be.

'Art. 6. The Commission shall be composed of nine members of the chapter of the cathedral, of the Superior of the great and little Seminaries, of the Superior of the missionaries of the diocese, of the Curé of Lourdes, the professors of dogma, of morals, and of physics, belonging to the Seminaries. The professor of chemistry also shall attend.

'Art. 7. M. Nogare, canon arch-priest, is named president of the Commission; the canons Tabaries and Soulé are named vice-presidents. The Commission will appoint from its own members a secretary and two under-secretaries.

'Art. 8. The Commission will commence its labours at once, and meet as often as may be necessary.

'Given at Tarbes, in our Episcopal Palace, under our hand and seal, the 28th July, 1858.

'✠ BERTRAND-S^RE, Bishop of Tarbes.'

The Commission, thus carefully constituted, met on November 17, at Lourdes. Having served notice upon the different parties to be examined, they proceeded to the grotto. As soon as their arrival became known, about four hundred persons followed them to Massabielle; and there, while awaiting the arrival of Bernadette, they commenced their enquiries respecting the fountain. They learned from old people, long acquainted with the place, that there never had been any water there, streamlet, well, or fountain, previous to the visits of Bernadette; but that, since the day when the Apparition commanded her to go and wash in the fountain, the stream had flowed without cessation, limpid and abundant. Nothing could have been more devotional or impressive than the attitude of the people assembled at the grotto upon this occasion.

Most of them were on their knees, praying, with their beads in their hands, and the countenances of all were expressive of the most ardent faith. Some were washing themselves at the fountain, or filling bottles or tin cases with its water, while all the men had their hats off, as if in a church.

When Bernadette arrived, the crowd respectfully opened a passage for her, and she presented herself to the Commission with an air of great modesty combined with perfect self-possession. She was calm and unembarrassed in the presence of so many venerable ecclesiastics, whom she had never seen before. Finding that the pressure of the crowd and their anxiety to hear were likely to interrupt the good order of their proceedings, the Commission adjourned to the sacristy of the church at Lourdes, and it was there that Bernadette, with much simplicity and conviction, narrated to them the history of her visions, with which my readers are now familiar. The abstract of her narration will be found in the account published by the Abbé Fourcade, secretary to the Commission, and approved by the Bishop of Tarbes.*

I have already described the opposition which belief in the occurrences at Massabielle had met from the free-thinkers, liberal journalists, and civil authorities of the town. This opposition took many shapes. The father of incredulity is never deficient in supplying, from his inexhaustible arsenals, his votaries with new forms and weapons of attack. It was circulated that the water of the fountain, like the waters of Barèges and many other Pyrenean springs, possessed highly curative properties, and a chemist of the vicinity, well known for his liberal opinions, was employed to analyse it. The result of his analysis was a declaration that the spring at Massabielle did possess curative qualities of powerful efficacy. Other chemists were employed differing from each other in their religious and political views, and they arrived at a totally

* *L'Apparition à la grotte de Lourdes, en* 1858. Notice rédigée par M. l'abbé Fourcade, chanoine, secrétaire de la Commission. Tarbes. (1862.)

opposite conclusion. Among these, M. Filhol, an eminent chemist from Toulouse, affirmed, after careful analysis, that the water of the grotto of Massabielle contained no more curative nor mineral properties than did the waters of the Gave or the Garonne—that is, none at all; and that in all its qualities it was nothing but natural water. 'It results from this analysis,' he writes, 'that the water of the grotto at Lourdes is like all drinkable water, and resembles that which is generally found in these mountains, where the soil is calcareous. It has no active substance capable of imparting to it any curative power.' The detail of this important analysis will be found in the Appendix.*

M. Lagrèze has well observed on this subject:—'Our thermal waters of the Pyrenees no doubt have effected and continue to effect daily very wonderful cures, but they never act with the rapidity of a magical wand, and it never happens that the invalid who uses them has been transferred by an instantaneous recovery from the gates of death to the highways of life. There are mysteries and hidden virtues in our waters of which science has not even yet discovered the secrets; but it usually can predict their general effects beforehand; it can explain their probable action and assist it; it knows even how to retard or accelerate their action, which, however, invariably produces its results slowly. The paralysed has recovered his strength by degrees; but never has the physician been able to say to the man, lying motionless on his bed, "Take a glass of water and walk" ("Prenez un verre d'eau et marchez").'†

It was objected that, supposing Bernadette to have been of perfect good faith in her revelations, that which she saw most probably was merely an optical delusion, produced by certain atmospheric combinations in the grotto, which from time to time took the resemblance of the human form, and which her imagination had decked with the beauty and colour attributed to the Virgin. This objection was fully tested. Scientific men were employed to

* Appendix L. † *Histoire de la ville et du château de Lourdes*, p. 182.

examine all the sinuosities of the grotto, which have been minutely described at the opening of this account, under every aspect and shade of light and weather, and nothing was discovered that could in the remotest way sustain the objection.

At the time when Bernadette first beheld the Apparition, there was no predisposing cause in her health or occupations that might have produced hallucination. She was simply gathering wood; and, so little was her ignorant mind filled with visionary ideas, that she could not believe what she saw. It was not during the doubtful shadows of twilight that the Apparition first showed itself to her; it was in the full glare of the noontide, at an hour little favourable to optical illusions. If it was simply a hallucination, produced by the singular conformation of the grotto, why did it not produce a similar effect at other times and on other people? Why was it that the Vision never revealed itself to her until she had been some time in prayer, and had recited a portion of the Rosary? How was it that upon two distinct occasions, during the fortnight of her invited visits, the Vision did not present itself to her, although the circumstances were identical? If it be granted that her young imagination had become exalted, and that the optical delusions of the grotto had fascinated her vision to the extent of conjuring before it a mysterious being, whose appearance and dress she described with the utmost minuteness, how is it that she heard that soft voice, and that she imagined that message to the priests? In fine, how is it explained that on the last day but one of these apparitions, the Vision should have told her that she was the Immaculate Conception, when it is known that Bernadette had never heard these words before, and was in absolute ignorance of their signification?

It is not possible, with any pretence to common sense, to assert that Bernadette, at her age, with her antecedents, her simplicity and ignorance, could, for the space of an entire month, have been the victim of optical delusions

and religious hallucinations, which were altogether of a character foreign to her daily occupations and habits, and which nothing in her character or disposition was calculated to generate. Her most determined opponents never have cast a doubt upon her good faith or truthfulness. Their hostility was defeated, and their stratagems overthrown, as we have seen in the instances of Jacomet and Baron Massy, by the straightforwardness and consistency of her statement. Why was it that the Apparition invited Bernadette to repeat her visits during fifteen consecutive days, unless it was that more certain and public testimony might be given to the fact? If our Lady had shown herself but once or twice, as at La Salette, incredulity would have been more audacious in its denials, and faith less positive in its assertions. May it not, then, be considered that the object of these eighteen different apparitions, almost always in presence of a large multitude, who witnessed Bernadette's ecstasy, and the supernatural transfiguration of her countenance, was that the slightest shadow of doubt might be removed, and the revelation rendered more conspicuous and transcendent? Assuredly we must, according to all the laws of human evidence, believe that the apparition at the grotto of Lourdes was not a fiction, and has a right to credit. I do not dwell upon the objection made, even by good Catholics, which, granting this apparition to have been a reality, deems that possibly it may have been only an illusion of the devil. The numerous miracles which attest its divine parentage, and the power and goodness of the Immaculate Mother of God, are a sufficient answer to this argument.

'When the Almighty determined to convert mankind by the preaching of the Gospel, He chose twelve fishermen of Judæa—twelve simple, ignorant, poor men, without credit in the world; and rapidly power, wisdom, ability, and strength were subdued by these twelve fishermen. And thus it will always be. Bernadette, the humble shepherdess, the indigent little girl, gathering wood on the banks of the Gave; Bernadette, who raises a sneer on

the lips of learned theorists and profound politicians, quite naturally becomes the instrument of the designs of God, and the foundress of a work that she cannot foresee; showing more clearly the power of the divine action by the greater impotence of the human agent. Oh! astonishing wisdom; oh! wonderful love of God.'*

I now proceed to place before my readers some of the authenticated miracles, which were made the subject of enquiry by the Commission, and which have placed beyond dispute, with all thoughtful Christians, the supernatural character of the occurrences at Massabielle.

About twenty-four years ago, two quarrymen at Lourdes, brothers of the names of Louis and Joseph Bourriette, were charging a mine, when it exploded, killing Joseph on the spot, and dreadfully burning the face and seriously injuring the right eye of Louis. His sufferings were so great, that during three months he was out of his mind, through pain, it being necessary to use a strait-waistcoat to keep him in bed; and for the space of two years his head was in a continued state of inflammatory agitation. By degrees, his health and reason became better; but when he recommenced his labour as quarryman, he found that he could not work without the assistance of another person, in consequence of the injury to his eye. At last it grew so bad, that the sight in it became almost extinct. News of the marvellous events at the grotto, and of the new-born fountain that had suddenly issued from the rock, was brought to him, and he forthwith despatched his daughter to bring him some of the water. There was some difficulty in procuring a bottle of it, as the stream did not then flow copiously. No sooner did he apply it to his eye than he discerned the light, and on the third day of its application his sight was perfectly restored. Since that period he has continued to enjoy its use. He appeared before the Commission two years subsequently, and protested his own

* *Discours de M. l'abbé Alix, pour la bénédiction de la statue de la Très-Sainte Vierge à la grotte de Lourdes*, p. 45.

conviction that his cure was the work of God, through his immaculate Mother, operating through the fountain at Massabielle. Dr. Dozous of Lourdes, who was in constant attendance upon Bourriette during his most acute sufferings, furnished a detailed report of the case to the Commissioners, showing the seriousness of the injury and the unexpected rapidity of the cure. Dr. Verges of Tarbes proved the original disturbance of the organ caused by the wound, and its subsequent complete restoration. The seriousness of the injury, the duration of its effects, the failure of medical art in its treatment, its almost immediate and continued recovery, brought about through the agency of simple water, left no doubt upon the minds of these physicians as to its supernatural character. This cure took place almost immediately after the appearance of the fountain, and is the first miracle attributed to its waters.

Blaisette Soupenne, of Lourdes, about fifty years of age, had been afflicted during three years by a complaint in the eyelids ('une blépharite compliquée d'éctropion'), teary, swollen, slimy, uplifted lids, with sight impaired. She had vainly tried medical prescriptions, as well as the waters of Barèges, Cauterets, and Gazost. As soon as she heard of the fountain at Massabielle, she went there in a spirit of firm faith. She washed her eyes, and instantly felt an amelioration. The next day, three hours before the dawn, she was again at the fountain; and, upon washing her eyes the second time, she found herself quite cured. The fleshy excrescences disappeared from the lids; they regained their natural position, and lost their slimy appearance, preserving no trace of the recent malady. Her declaration, taken upon oath before the Commission, was confirmed by her attending physician, Dr. Dozous, and by many other persons who had known her both before and after the cure. She was examined on the part of the Commission by Dr. Verges; and both physicians concurred in declaring the supernatural character of the cure.

Croizine Duconte, of Lourdes, thirty-eight years of age, made a declaration on oath of the following facts, before the Commission. Her child, two years old, had been continually unwell from its birth: she and her neighbours believed him to be dying—his strength was exhausted, and his countenance had all the lividness of a corpse, when she felt an inspiration to take him to the fountain. It was the 28th February, 1858. Her husband shuddered at the proposal, believing that the slight fatigue of the journey would kill him before he could reach the fountain. She, however, persisted, and, overcoming his objection, carefully wrapped the little creature in her apron and started off with him. When she arrived at the grotto there was a considerable crowd there, and they all expressed their compassion at the appearance of the little child, and their astonishment at the mother, who was about to try such a remedy as immersion in cold water. One woman went so far as to implore her to wait for a few hours, if she was so tired of her child, and not to hasten his death by dipping him in the fountain. Croizine, however, listened only to the inspiration which had brought her to the grotto; and, uncovering her son, she plunged him boldly into the fountain. The bystanders were horror-struck at the mother's cruelty—she alone seemed to believe that the dying child would be cured. She took him out, dried him carefully, enveloped him again in her apron, and carried him back to his home. Scarcely had the child been replaced in his cradle, than he fell into a calm and profound sleep. During the evening and night, the mother, as usual, watched closely over him. He slept tranquilly until daylight, when he awoke and asked for food, and showed an inclination to get out of bed. The second night again he slept well, and in the morning got up, without assistance from anyone, and walked for the first time in his life, to the stupefaction of the neighbourhood. No one could believe that such a change could have taken place in so short a time. From that day forward, this

child, which had been so delicate, has become stout and hearty, and never has had an hour's illness.

Drs. Dozous and Verges examined this case separately. They both remarked in it three extraordinary circumstances, which are sufficient to class it as supernatural—the length of time during which the dying child was kept in the cold water, the immediate effect, and the capacity to walk within a short period afterwards. Cold-water baths, observes M. Verges, may be of great service in serious adynamic affections, but they must be used under careful advice, the transgression of which would be fatal. The physician would be mad who would order an exhausted, dying child to be kept in a bath of cold water for a quarter of an hour, in the month of February, as had been done in this instance; experience and reason therefore absolutely condemn the remedy adopted, under an impulse of strong faith, by this child's mother. Contrary to all physical laws, it immediately recovered its strength, slept well, and was able to walk within a few hours. This recovery may be regarded as instantaneous, or, to use his words, 'The child that had never walked escapes from the cradle, walks with the firmness that habit gives, and thus shows that he is perfectly cured, without any interval of convalescence, and in a manner altogether supernatural.'

Catherine Latassie-Chouat, of Loubajac, had put her right arm out of joint by a fall from a tree; and it was so badly reset, that two of her fingers remained permanently contracted; so that she was unable to sew or knit, or perform the ordinary business of her household. While suffering much from this inconvenience, which medical skill had proved itself unable to remedy, she felt an inward desire, as if an irresistible inspiration, to try the waters of the fountain at Massabielle. Having said the usual prayers, and feeling strong faith, she plunged her hand into the water. It was immediately cured; her fingers opened and assumed their natural form and elasticity; and from that time forward she has had the perfect use of her

hand. The nature of the injury, and the instantaneousness of the recovery, have induced the examining physicians, Dozous and Verges, to place it in the category of those which cannot be explained by natural causes.

Henri Busquet, of Nay, being about thirteen years of age in November 1856, was attacked by typhus fever. At the termination of the disease, an enormous tumour established itself on his neck; blisters and cataplasms being ineffectual for its removal, they had recourse to an operation, which seemed to have been successful. But, after four months, he had a second fever. The tumour, which had been closed, reopened; considerable inflammation set in, and several new tumours were formed. Again every remedy suggested by medical science was employed; but in vain. The wounds would heal over for a short time, and then break out again as inveterate as ever, seeming to defy every effort. In October 1857, the invalid was sent to the waters of Cauterets. On taking his first bath, the tumours reopened; and, after a fortnight of fruitless experiment, he returned to Nay in much the same condition in which he had left it. In this state of occasional amelioration and continued relapse he remained until April 1858, when he conceived the idea of going to Lourdes to bathe in the fountain, of whose miraculous effects the country was then full. He urgently requested from his parents permission to go there, and wished to make his journey on foot as a pilgrim; but, being too feeble for such an undertaking, this was refused. He then asked a pious person, in whom he had confidence, to bring him some of the water from Massabielle; which was brought to him on the 28th of April. About eight o'clock in the evening, when he was retiring to bed, he knelt down and requested his family to unite with him in the prayer which he was going to address to the most holy Virgin. The prayer being finished, Henri went to bed, drank some of the water with great faith, took off the bandages from his sores, and washed them with the same water. This being done he fell asleep with the conviction that this remedy would

prove infallible, and that he would awake cured. His holy confidence was not disappointed.

On the next day, April 29, his pains entirely ceased, and the young man joyfully told his mother that he was well. The good woman could not believe it, and, apprehensive of a new disappointment, she requested her son not to speak of it for a few days. She did not even take the trouble of looking at his sores, as she was much engaged in preparing six of her children for their first Communion and Confirmation. It was not until the third day that she yielded to the urgency of Henri, and examined the sores. She found them perfectly healed, the tumours quite subsided, and the deep large sore skinned over.

The Commission examined Henri Busquet on the 29th of November, in the same year. They found the traces of the affliction, by which he had been tormented during two years, still visible upon his neck and chest; but the wound itself was completely cicatrised. Four members of his family deposed to these circumstances upon oath, and several ecclesiastics of Nay bore testimony to their truthfulness and honesty. Dr. Verges, with some other members of the Commission, visited Busquet again in 1860. He says, in his report, that afflictions such as Busquet suffered from are very slow in their cure, as they belong to a class of scrofula; that recovery from them requires a complete organic modification; and that this fact alone, combined with the suddenness and the permanence of the cure, demonstrates that this case is outside the usual course of nature, and therefore must be supernatural. This same Henri Busquet is the person, to whose presence among the pilgrims from Nay, on the 24th of May, 1868, allusion is made in the account of Bétharram.

The widow, Madeleine Rizan, about fifty-eight years of age, also living at Nay, had a violent attack of cholera in 1834, which was followed by an organic disturbance so great as to produce constant pain. She suffered especially along her left side; she had become lame, she had extreme

dryness in her hands, and was subject to habitual vomitings, accompanied by obstinate dyspepsia. She took little food; seldom any meat, soup never; and a little wine and water only during the night, whenever she fainted, which happened frequently. She suffered extremely from chilliness, even during the heats of summer. Her condition became gradually worse; and on September 12, she seemed so far gone, that her family sent for the priest to administer the last Sacraments to her. She seemed unconscious while receiving Extreme Unction. On October 16, she had another crisis: her blood-spitting became frightful; she could not change her position in the bed, nor stir her limbs, without assistance. While in this state, the account of the cures effected by the waters of the fountain at Lourdes reached her, and she expressed an earnest desire to have some of the water brought to her. She sent a devout neighbour to Lourdes for that purpose. On Sunday, October 17, about seven in the morning, she drank some of the water; while she was drinking, she felt an indefinable sensation, as if they were tearing from her hand a glove that had been too tightly fitted. Instantly she raised her eyes to heaven, and exclaimed that she was cured; when her daughter washed her face with the water of the fountain, she felt a sensation such as might be occasioned by a violent eruption of pimples; and when she washed her left foot and knee, which were much swollen, the swelling immediately disappeard. Life and motion returned to the limb, and she wanted to get up.

Her friends were unwilling to allow her to make the effort; but in about two hours, without any help or support, she got up and prostrated herself before an image of the blessed Virgin, which was at the extremity of her room. Her appetite, which had left her for years, returned, and she asked for something to eat. In four days' time she was sufficiently recovered to be able to go to the chapel at Bétharram ('la dévote Chapelle'), where she heard three Masses successively and a sermon, without feeling fatigue or distress. Since that period, she has

continued perfectly well and able to perform all her duties; and she makes a point of attending annually, with the pilgrims from Nay, to offer her thanksgiving at the grotto.

In the month of June, 1860, Dr. Verges, accompanied by several members of the Commission, visited her and received her own evidence and that of her family, and of the priests at Nay, upon her former dangerous condition and her complete and sudden restoration. In his report, Dr. Verges recognises that all the circumstances of the case are marked by a supernatural character. One is penetrated with this conviction, he says, in considering, on the one side, the chronic nature of her illness, which dated so far back as 1834; the powerful agent—cholera—which had engendered it; the seat of the worst symptoms in one of the most important organs of life, the stomach; the inefficacy of all medical treatment, although directed by a most eminent physician (M. Suberbielle); the progressive lowering of her strength, consequent upon the prostration produced by constant acute pain; and on the other side, nothing but a draught of natural water taken once, and producing the most complete and instantaneous result.

Mademoiselle Marie Moreau, of Tartas, a pupil of the Convent of the Sacré Cœur at Bordeaux, was attacked by a complaint of the eyes in January 1858. Her parents, in consequence, were obliged to remove her from school, and she was placed under the treatment of M. Bermont, an eminent surgeon presiding over one of the hospitals at Bordeaux, but without any satisfactory results. The use of sea-bathing was recommended to her, but that also was inefficacious. No better effect was produced by a residence of six weeks in the country, whereupon her parents insisted upon taking her to Paris for advice. Before quitting the country the family desired to make a pilgrimage to the grotto of Lourdes, of which they had heard so much, but they had not time to do so. About the same period they read in the 'Messager catholique,' published at Bordeaux, the account of the miraculous cure of Madame Rizan. This reanimated their confidence in the blessed

Virgin, and decided them upon commencing a Novena in honour of our Lady of Lourdes, with an engagement to make a pilgrimage to the grotto and to reconsecrate Mdlle. Moreau 'au bleu et au blanc' if she should be cured within nine days. The Novena was commenced on November 8. Having procured some of the water from a priest in the neighbourhood, they dipped a bandage in it and put it over her eyes when she went to bed at night. The next morning, on awaking, she removed the bandage, and most agreeable was her surprise when she found that she could clearly distinguish every article in the room. She called her younger sister, and desired her to bring her a book, which she was able to read without the slightest difficulty. Having made this experiment, she got up, and went with great joy to seek her parents, and announce to them her cure. The happiness of the family need not be described, and on November 26, eighteen days after her recovery, they fulfilled their vow of making a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Since that period Marie Moreau has been perfectly well.

The Mayor of Tartas declared that he knew personally as a fact that Mdlle. Marie Moreau, the state of whose eyes had caused great uneasiness during a long time to her family, had been radically and instantaneously cured at the commencement of a Novena in honour of our Lady of Lourdes, and upon the application of a bandage dipped in the water of the fountain. The Commission received letters from the Superior and pupils of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Bordeaux, stating the gravity of her malady while there; and M. Bermont, her attending physician, made a written statement setting forth the serious nature of the disease, its resistance to all medical treatment, and its sudden and complete cure upon application of water from the fountain of Massabielle. 'Quant à l'instantanéité de la guérison,' he writes in his letter of February 8, 1859, 'telle qu'elle s'est produite, c'est un fait hors ligne, qui sort tout-à-fait des procédés au pouvoir de la science médicale.'

Dr. Verges agreed in the report of M. Bermont, and adds: 'Independently of the suddenness of the result which, when it exists, always constitues the characteristic mark of facts outside the order of nature, we find in this cure all the elements required to form a clear conclusion, a serious malady overcome by the use of water physically and chemically natural, the inefficacy of medical science in its previous treatment, and the steady continuance of the cure, notwithstanding the tendency of such cases to relapse.' *

I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Dr. Verges at Barèges, where he resides during the season of the baths. He enjoys a reputation for professional skill and success equalled only by his urbanity to strangers and attention to his patients. He is one of those rare men of intuitive talent and winning kindliness who can accomplish so much in the detection of disease and its causes, and the rapid appreciation of remedies, while they captivate the confidence and affection of the invalid, and thus doubly ensure attention to their advice. He frequently discussed with me those cases which had been submitted to his examination on the part of the bishop, and it may be permitted here to say that he no more doubted their miraculous character than he doubted the curative powers of the waters of Barèges, of which he had had long and distinguished experience.

I have given in some detail the seven preceding supernatural cures, which, with many others, had been subjected to the examination of the Commission, because they have been selected by them as those especially which cannot admit of explanation in any natural way; and because they were the first cures which contributed to establish the truth of Bernadette's vision, and confirmed

* 'Indépendamment de l'instantanéité du résultat, qui forme toujours, quand elle existe, le trait caractéristique des faits qui se produisent en dehors de l'ordre de la nature, on trouve dans cette guérison tous les éléments nécessaires pour constituer une conviction forte: la gravité du mal vaincue par l'eau physiquement et chimiquement naturelle; l'inanité des efforts de la science médicale, et la persistance de la guérison en dépit de la tendance du mal aux récidives.'—FOURCADE, *L'Apparition à la grotte de Lourdes*, p. 73.

her story of the apparition. Upon these cases I might well rest my proofs of this modern mystery, and call upon my readers to kneel down with me and make the sacrifice of their doubts and prejudices, in homage to such patent evidence. But as I deem it important that these events should be fully understood by my English readers, it seems to me desirable to trespass further upon their time with the recital of sundry miracles of a more recent date: to those who read for edification, they will not fail to prove beneficial; to those who read for curiosity, they will not fail to prove interesting.

There are few recitals of more interest than the account of the cure of Frances Pailhes of Maquens, near Carcassonne. It is given by a writer in the 'Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes'* with a power and detail that exceed the limits of this work, and which I should injure by abridgment. A poor work-girl, in a factory at the village of Maquens, became the victim of a complaint which baffled the skill of the doctors; and after intense suffering of many months, her death was momentarily expected, and her debility so great that she wanted strength to swallow. After many efforts, however, she succeeded in distilling a few drops of the water of Lourdes down her throat, and she was instantaneously cured. She rose up in her bed and called out to her attendant, 'I am cured, Margaret, I am cured!' ('Guérie, Marguerite, je suis guérie!'). When asked subsequently to give an account of her sensations at the moment of her recovery, she briefly said, 'I hoped; I believed; I prayed; I drank a few drops of the water; I was cured.'

The news of her cure having quickly circulated, the neighbours flocked in to assure themselves of the fact, and to their enquiries she replied, 'It is the blessed Virgin who has cured me; look at the bottle which contained the water from Lourdes;' and then she added, 'It is not for me alone that this miracle has taken place, it is for

* Tom. i. p. 42.

you likewise. I never can love our blessed Lady enough; you also must love her; we all must love her.'

Jean-Marie Fosses, native of Trébons in the Upper Pyrenees, formerly a *gendarme*, but now an innkeeper at Arzacq in the Lower Pyrenees, was suddenly cured at the grotto of Lourdes, on November 11, 1867. The story is this:—He was sitting one evening at his door, enjoying the fresh air and the delight of returning health after a long sickness, when he suddenly felt his face glow, while a cold sweat gathered upon his brow, and his neck became quite stiff; a fierce pain, that almost drove him to madness, attacked his head, and thenceforth he had no rest. His nights were passed in excruciating suffering, such as those can comprehend who have ever been afflicted by acute neuralgia or witnessed it in others. His appetite gave way, his strength failed, his imagination became affected, and his thoughts turned entirely upon death and his last hour. Hope and energy left him, as remedy after remedy produced no permanent alleviation, until at last he refused to take any more medicine.

'I tremble,' he said to the doctor, 'when I see you write a new prescription. I will take no more of them. You are clever and kind, but not one of your medicines has done me the least service. On the contrary, they are helping to kill me, and it is useless for you to prescribe any more.'

The doctor endeavoured to argue with him, but no further drug was ordered, and he used to say, 'If ever I get well, it will not be through the doctors.'

His habitual temper, which was easy and jovial, had now become cross and querulous, and he was unable to restrain his outbursts, which would subsequently fill him with regret and self-reproach.

While Fosses was in this plight, a pedlar stopped for the night at the inn. Fosses was sitting at the corner of his fire, silent and depressed. While the stranger was taking his supper, he heard them talking about the long illness of the innkeeper and the inefficacy of every remedy,

and, when he had finished his meal, he joined the conversation and learned his sad story from the invalid himself.

'Well,' said the traveller, 'I have been as bad and helpless as you. I consulted physicians, followed their remedies for three long years, but to no use. I am, however, recovered, but it was not man that cured me; I owe nothing to men. I had an old wound in my neck, which was in a state of constant suppuration, and caused me to suffer cruelly. I went to Cauterets, Bagnères-de-Bigorre, and Luchon, and spent no end of money, but all to no purpose. I had heard of our Lady of Buglose and the miraculous cures performed through her intercession, and, having no longer any help to expect from human art, I thought that I would turn myself towards the blessed Virgin. So far from doing me any good, the waters of Barèges had rendered my wound more painful.

'While at Barèges I heard of the pilgrimage and miracles of Lourdes. All that I heard about them inspired me with great confidence, and I determined to go there and remain a couple of days. When I saw the crowd of people that daily flocked to the grotto, my confidence became greater and greater. I went there, I prayed there, I drank the water, I washed in the fountain, and instantly I felt myself better. I took off the bandages, the suppuration had dried up, the flesh had been drawn together, and all pain had ceased. I prayed and washed and drank again the next day; I was entirely cured. You may imagine my happiness. Nevertheless, I went on to Buglose, and fulfilled my vow there. Look at my neck; there is not now even the sign of a sore. Have confidence in our Lady of Lourdes. I may tell you so. Go to the grotto, and you will, like me, be cured there.'

This account of the pedlar struck Fosses, who always was a good pious Catholic, as a direct message from Heaven. While the traveller was speaking, he already felt an assurance of his own cure, and he secretly decided upon making the pilgrimage to the grotto. Among those who used to visit Fosses during his sickness was a certain

schoolmaster named Dussau, a grave, religious, well-considered man. To him Fosses mentioned his intention of making a pilgrimage to Lourdes.

'I am delighted to hear it,' replied Dussau; 'for some time I have been hesitating about proposing it to you, as I feared to find you incredulous. I can bear testimony myself to what our Lady of Lourdes can do. I was spending a few days at that city with my friends, and, seeing the crowd of strangers that daily passed to the grotto, I went there also. As they prayed, I also prayed. For some days I had been very unwell, and was suffering internally. Touched by the faith of these pilgrims, my heart urged me to imitate them; I drank and washed without feeling any extraordinary fervour. However, at the instant that I drank, my malady suddenly left me, and I have never been ailing since. Doctors, you know, can never cure you, so take my advice and address yourself to our Lady of Lourdes.'

After various difficulties, Fosses, accompanied by his wife, at last set out upon his pilgrimage; and, as soon as he had slightly refreshed himself at the hotel, he proceeded slowly along the rough road to Massabielle. The people of the hotel observed, on seeing him so pale and emaciated:

'What can that poor creature expect at the grotto? He will never reach it, or, if he does, he will never come back alive.'

He could scarcely crawl along; but his devotion and confidence were great, and as he respectfully approached, he cried out with emotion:

'At last so near the spot where the blessed Virgin has shown herself!' ('Si près! si près du lieu où la Sainte Vierge s'est montrée!') I well remember that a similar expression trembled upon my own lips on the occasion of my first pilgrimage to this beloved sanctuary on May 25, 1868. Fosses described his feelings at that moment in the following words to a writer who has given these details:—

'I was seized with unutterable emotion; I was there, joyous but trembling. I felt as if I was about to present myself before a powerful sovereign. I was full of respect, more than I could have felt in a palace or a church. At the same time I felt assured, but very tranquil; I was as if dazzled. But I cannot make you understand it. If it was something natural, I could explain it to you; words would come to me, but this I cannot explain.'*

He heard Mass the next morning at half-past five o'clock in the crypt of the unfinished church. With what emotion does the present writer recall the first time when, on a brilliant morning of glowing May, he too had the privilege of hearing Mass at five o'clock in that most devotional crypt! Would that it was in his power to recount the attainment of spiritual graces, for himself and for others, for which he then prayed—some of them apparently not less beyond hope than the corporal ailments of Jean-Marie Fosses!

Having received holy Communion and heard Mass, he drank again at the fountain, and prepared to enter the bath. His wife waited with much apprehension, for it was November 11, and the water was intensely cold. It was seven o'clock; a severe frost had hardened the banks of the Gave, and the *bise*, or north-east wind, was whistling around the grotto. He remained in the bath a considerable time, trembling with cold in all his limbs, but glowing with confidence in all his heart; and on coming out, after a second immersion, he proclaimed that he was recovered. It is best told in his own simple words.

'I was suffering frightfully, and yet never had I a moment of so much happiness. Scarcely had I dried myself, when I felt something indescribable pass through my body, something at the same time gentle and powerful, which inundated my limbs. I could not say what it was—something that seemed to be like the liquor of life. Yes! life was passing into me. I was becoming cured; I was

* *Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, 4me livraison, p. 56.

cured. My countenance was trembling; I smiled involuntarily, naturally, sweetly. Everything seemed to me beautiful. I looked at the rock with ecstasy; I smiled upon my wife, and said to her, "I am cured!" I felt my head, so sensitive whenever I touched it before, and I said to my wife, "My dear, I no longer feel any pain." At the bottom of the nape of my neck there had been for some days a large tumour, very painful, very alarming, the remnant of another terrible malady. This had almost entirely disappeared. "See!" I said to my wife, "there is nothing at all to mark the place, and I have no pain." My wife, excited and confused, helped me to dress, but did not know what to say. For myself, I felt and knew that I was cured, and, glorifying the blessed Virgin, I hurried to the grotto, that I might thank Her.'*

For some weeks he had not been able to bend his feet, now they had suddenly become supple, and he walked vigorously and alert. To verify his recovery he stamped strongly with his heels upon the frozen earth without feeling pain or inconvenience. When he returned to the hotel, those who had seen him go out in the morning, and had prophesied that he never would come back alive, could not believe their sight. The little village of Arzacq resounded with the news of this recovery, and most of the simple villagers, giving thanks to the blessed Virgin Mary, said it was a miracle. Others there were who tried to explain it philosophically, and they said it was a cure in which recovery was not impossible. The attendant doctor was pleased to observe: 'It is the blessed Virgin, no doubt, and the—remedies' ('C'est la Sainte Vierge, oui! et les—remèdes'). A jesting apothecary of the village, who rather boasted himself upon his wit—I have known such apothecaries in other places besides Arzacq—was heard to say, 'This must not be made public, or what would become of me? The blessed Virgin would be too powerful a rival in my practice' ('Ne publiez pas ceci, je

* *Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, 4me livraison, p. 58.

vous en prie. Que deviendrais-je? La Sainte Vierge me ferait une trop forte concurrence').

The ancient *gendarme,* the simple, courageous Christian, gives his own version:—'I had suffered horribly for more than three months; the physician had declared to me that I could not possibly recover in less than three years. I was worn out by remedies, and I had ceased to take any more. I go to Lourdes, I bathe in the well at the grotto, and I am cured instantaneously and radically, and during nine months that have since elapsed my cure has continued.'. An eminent foreign physician interrogated Fosses, in the presence of the writer of the account in the 'Annales,' and he declared that such a case as this could not be explained in any natural way, and must have been miraculous.

Jean-Marie Fosses went back to Lourdes at the end of June 1868. Those who had seen him on his previous visit could not recognise the emaciated sufferer in the well-conditioned, fresh-coloured veteran who knelt before the statue of our Lady in rapt and fervent gratitude, and who exhibits in his daily life, by a strong and valiant piety, his sentiment of the responsibility incurred by such a favour as he had received. 'I am naturally good,' he once said, 'but my temper is rather hot. I never made much effort to correct it, but now one great idea is enough to curb me—the blessed Virgin will be displeased. That at once restrains me, and if I should be betrayed into a little hastiness ("s'il m'arrive un coup de promptitude"), I make an act of contrition and ask her pardon.'

The name and life of Father Hermann, once a Jew and distinguished pianist, now a Carmelite friar and eloquent preacher, are well known in England. He was staying, in the month of September 1868, at the retreat of the order known as the Desert of Carmel, near Tarastein, in the Upper Pyrenees. About that period I went to Tarbes to visit the bishop, and there I learned for the first time that this eminent convert was threatened with total blindness. Some months afterwards the account of his miraculous cure, through the intercession of our Lady of

Lourdes, and the use of the waters of Massabielle, reached me at Pau. He himself shall tell the story in his letter addressed to the five confraternities instituted by him at Lyons, Orleans, Arras, Rodez, and London.*

'PAX CHRISTI. J. M. J.

'Bagnères-de-Bigorre: November 6, 1868.

'My dear friends in Jesus Christ,—I have just received a new pledge of the tenderness of the blessed Virgin towards her children, and my heart overflows with joy while I inform you of it. After passing six months in the delicious solitude of our Desert of Carmel at Tarastein in the Upper Pyrenees, I became so seriously affected by ophthalmia that I was obliged, through holy obedience, to go to Bordeaux to consult a celebrated oculist. For a month previous to my departure I had been forbidden all reading, even that of my breviary. The learned oculist examined my eyes with the greatest attention and warmest solicitude. He found that they were in a very alarming condition, and said that he observed a total cloudiness (*obnubilation*), an excavation of the optical pupils, and a greyish colour on the ball ("une excavation des pupilles optiques, une teinte grisâtre sur le fond de la lame criblée"). From these facts combined he concluded that there existed a disease which in scientific language is called *glaucoma*. He told me that no remedies could prevent inflammation from setting in, and that upon such taking place in the slightest degree, it would be necessary to have recourse to an excision of the iris—an operation invented by the illustrious Dr. Graefe, of Berlin, who had operated successfully for cataract upon my brother, M. Louis Cohen.

'However, my malady grew daily worse, and I left Bordeaux, supplied with spectacles, double convex glasses, green shades, and a number of other precautions. The

* This confraternity, 'Confrèrie de l'Action de Grâces universelle,' was established in 1859. It has been approved and enriched with several Indulgences by the Pope, and counts no less than 50,000 associates. Its principal centres are in the places to which he addresses the letter above.

sandals of the barefooted Carmelite had to give place to shoes lined with fur, the monk's tonsure was covered by warm head-gear, and my sight became so sensitive that I could no longer endure the light of a common taper or candle, nor could I support even the light of day. I could read only a few words at intervals, and that only with much injury and fatigue to the optic nerve. Being in this condition, the idea was suggested to me of a Novena to our Lady of Lourdes, through whose intercession many persons affected by blindness had been restored.

'This proposal was much more to my taste than the surgical operation, the success of which was very doubtful. I remembered that, twenty-two years ago, Mary had obtained for me from the God of the Eucharist a recovery infinitely more important than that of corporal sight, by delivering me from the blindness of Judaism; that, somewhat later, through her intercession, several members of my family were liberated from the darkness of the synagogue; that, thirteen years ago, through her power with her divine Son, she had obtained the restoration to health of my mother, who lay on her bed of death not yet baptised; and believing that these spiritual miracles are much more difficult than any cure of bodily ailments, I did not hesitate to hope strongly that I should experience the benefit of her merciful goodness.

'The Novena was commenced on October 24, the Feast of the Archangel Raphael, who had miraculously cured the young Tobias of his blindness. I bathed my eyes every day with the salutary water brought from the miraculous grotto, and I prayed daily to the Immaculate Virgin, while a great many holy souls also prayed with me. On the sixth day of the Novena I went on foot from our convent at Bagnères to Lourdes, as I desired to perform the pilgrimage on the conditions most likely to ensure its success. I had felt already at Bagnères each day, as the Novena progressed, an amelioration of the ophthalmia with which I was afflicted, and this I felt especially at the moment when I bathed my eyes with the water. I had taken the pre-

caution to test this improvement by the ophthalmoscope, through means of which the physician was enabled to see that the congestion of the visual organ diminished gradually, although I employed no other remedy than that of the miraculous water.

'At length, upon the last day of the Novena, being the Feast of All Saints, I was praying in the grotto, near the fountain, when I found all symptoms of my disease disappear. Since that moment I write and read as much as I wish without spectacles, without any precaution, without any fatigue. I can fix my eyes upon the sun, look at the gas-burner or the lamp, and do not suffer the slightest injury. I have resumed my sandals, uncovered my tonsure, and recovered that, for which above all other things I have sighed, the ability to pursue the duties of my eremitical life in our beloved desert. In one word, I am radically cured, and my most profound conviction is that this cure is a miracle, due to the intercession of the blessed Virgin.

'Therefore it is needful that I should publish, as widely as depends upon me, the goodness of the heart of Mary. I implore all those souls, who love this tender Mother, to render thanks to God on my behalf; and I further implore all those who do suffer to have recourse, with full confidence, to Her whom no one has ever invoked in vain.'

On November 12, Father Hermann said Mass in the crypt, in thanksgiving for his recovery, with a fervour which communicated itself to all who were present. The congregation joined him in some of those touching *cantiques* in honour of the blessed Sacrament composed by him, and which breathe in such gentle harmony his profound affection for the mystery of the Eucharist. After Mass he read his letter aloud, and delivered a few burning words expressive of his love and gratitude. He then mentioned a circumstance which he had unintentionally omitted in his letter. He said, that while on his knees before the grotto, and reciting the last decade of the Novena, a deep and solemn sentiment suddenly

took possession of his soul. He could not control it; and, without thinking what he did, he interrupted his prayer, turned round to a priest and lady who were kneeling near him, and said to them: 'I feel that the blessed Virgin has cured me completely at this very moment' ('Je sens que la Sainte Vierge me guérit tout-à-fait à ce moment').

Father Hermann was the first priest who visited the grotto after the apparitions, where he frequently led the pilgrims in their hymns to a melody of his own inspiration. The music of the first *cantique* in honour of our Lady of Lourdes was composed by him to words written by Mgr. Bouillerie, Bishop of Carcassonne.

Chantez, enfants de Marie,
Chantez ce chœur triomphant,
A Lourdes une petite enfant
A vu cette Mère chérie.
Elle était belle, et ses yeux
Lançaient des regards joyeux.

Among the numerous miraculous cases reported, there is none of more interest than that which is recorded by M. Henri Lasserre in his own person. My readers cannot fail to share the pleasure I felt in reading the account, which I abridge from his recital. He writes:—'I was blessed during all my life with the enjoyment of the most excellent sight. I could distinguish objects at a great distance, whilst I could equally read the smallest print, however near. I have spent whole nights in study, and my eyes never felt the slightest fatigue. I used to wonder at the strength and activity of an organ that was at the same time so correct and accurate. My disappointment and despair may be imagined when, in the course of the months of June and July, I felt this boasted sight grow dim, become clouded during my work at night, and finally refuse me its services altogether; so that I was obliged completely to give up both reading and writing. When I tried to read, I felt so much fatigue in the ball of my eye that after three or four lines it became impossible for me to continue. I consulted several physicians; in parti-

cular two distinguished specialists, M. Desmares and M. Giraud-Teulon. In fact I left no source of remedy untried, not neglecting change of scene and air. Having continued in this condition for more than three months, and finding myself obliged to employ a little boy as secretary to write to my dictation, a profound melancholy seized upon me.

'I had a very intimate friend, the playmate of my boyhood, to whom I was in the habit of confiding my joys and my sorrows. I dictated a letter to him, in which I communicated to him my painful position, as well as my apprehensions for the future. My friend and his wife were Protestants. He had a clear, positive, mathematical intellect, but little prone to enthusiasm or illusion. My surprise, therefore, was great when I received from him the following reply to my letter, which I give word for word :—

'"My dear friend,—Your few lines have given me great pleasure; but, as I have told you already, I am impatient to receive a letter from you in your own handwriting. I have passed through Lourdes, near Tarbes, and there I visited the celebrated grotto, and learned things so wonderful respecting cures effected by its waters, principally in diseases of the eye, that I very seriously urge you to try them. If I were a Catholic, believing as you do, and sick, I would not hesitate to run this chance. If it is true that sick people have been cured suddenly, you may hope to add to the number; if it is not true, what do you risk by the experiment? I will add that I have a slight personal interest in this effort. If it should succeed, what an important fact for me to register! I shall be in presence of a miracle, the principal evidence of which will be above all suspicion.

'"It seems," my friend added in a postscript, "that it is not even necessary to go to Lourdes to take the water, which you can have sent to you. One bottle is sufficient. You have only to ask the Curé of Lourdes, and he will send it to you. It is necessary previously to perform certain formalities which I do not too well know how to describe

to you, but the Curé of Lourdes will inform you. Beg of him also to send you a little pamphlet by the Vicar-General of Tarbes, which gives an account of the best authenticated miraculous events."

'Strange to say, I could not bring myself to follow the advice of my friend. I admit that, on reading his letter, I was seized with an intimate conviction that if I drank that water I should be cured; but I deeply felt my own unworthiness, and I feared the responsibility of any miraculous action in my behalf. "If you are cured by ordinary appliances," I said to myself, "you can discharge your obligations by feeing the doctor; but if you are cured by the intervention of a miracle, by a special effort of the power of God, it is quite another affair, and nothing short of an entire change of life will be sufficient to acquit the debt which you will have incurred." And thus, in this unbefitting state of mind, I decided upon refusing the remedy which was supernaturally offered to me. In the meantime the state of my eyes daily became worse.

'This was in the middle of September, and in the early days of October I was obliged to go to Paris, where I called upon my friend. Almost his first question, as I entered the drawing-room, was regarding the state of my eyes; and learning that they had not improved, he demanded my reasons for not trying the remedy which he had suggested. I candidly told him my difficulty, which he combated with energy and earnestness. He said: "Your objection has no force. According to your religious principles you must believe, and you do believe, in the possibility of such things; why, therefore, should you not make an experiment in your own person? * * * At present you are not less obliged to lead a good life than you would be in the event of your cure. If you were cured by a doctor, surely it still would be through the power of God, and you would not be less bound in gratitude to Him to endeavour to overcome your weaknesses and subdue your passions." At last I yielded to his

urgency, and before I left him he wrote at my dictation a letter to the Curé of Lourdes, requesting that a bottle of water from the fountain of the Apparition might be sent to me.

'My friend then went on to remind me that, as I was about to make the experiment, I ought not to neglect the usual conditions—that I ought to recite the prescribed prayers and go to confession. "You are perfectly right," I observed; "but assuredly you are a strange kind of Protestant. Yesterday you preached faith in miracles to me; to-day you urge upon me the practice of the religious duties of my Church. Truly our parts are changed."

'"I am a man of science," he replied, "and I merely desire that, as you are about to make a certain experiment, you should observe the conditions laid down for its success. I reason as I would do in a case of physics or chemistry."

'I must acknowledge, to my shame, that I did not prepare myself in the manner which my friend had so judiciously ordered. Indeed I was at that moment in a very bad frame of mind; my soul was profoundly agitated, troubled, and disposed to evil. I admitted fully the necessity of humbling myself at the feet of a priest, that is to say, at the feet of God; but as I had not been guilty of any gross, flagrant sins, such as awaken remorse and cause reaction, I kept putting off from day to day. A week passed, and I continued in this state of mind before I received any reply from Lourdes. At last an answer came, and a small case was delivered to me containing a bottle of the water and the pamphlet giving an account of the apparitions of our Lady and of sundry miracles. I confess that I received it with tremulous nervousness. When I reached my room I knelt down at the side of my bed and prayed, undeserving as I felt to raise my eyes to heaven and speak to God. At the same time it seemed to me as if in that solitary chamber something great was about to happen. I feared to touch with my unworthy hands the box which contained that blessed water, and on

the other side I felt myself strongly tempted not to wait until I had gone to confession, as I proposed to do that evening, but to open the case and use the water at once. I cried out:

'"O my God, I am indeed a miserable sinner, unworthy to lift my voice to you or to touch anything that you have consecrated. But the greatness of my misery will excite your compassion. My God! I present myself to you and to the blessed Virgin Mary, full of hope and confidence, and from the depths of the abyss I raise my cries towards you. This evening I will confess my sins to your minister, but my faith and confidence urge me not to wait until then. Forgive me, O Lord, and heal me; and thou, O Mother of Mercy, come and succour your afflicted child!"

'Having thus prayed, I opened the box, uncorked the bottle, poured some of the water into a cup, and took a towel from my drawer. Having done all this, I knelt down again and said aloud, "O holy Virgin Mary, have pity on me, and cure me of my blindness spiritual and corporal!" ("O Sainte Vierge Marie, ayez pitié de moi, et guérissez mon aveuglement physique et moral!")

'Having said these words, and with a heart full of faith, I rubbed my forehead and eyes successively with the towel, which I had saturated with the water of Lourdes. This act did not take more than half a minute. How can I tell my sensation, I might almost say my terror, when I found that without transition, as the water had scarcely touched my brow, I was cured with a rapidity which in my imperfect language I can compare only to that of the lightning!* I could not immediately believe the change. I did not credit my senses. After the lapse of ten minutes, finding that I did not relapse, I cried out, "I am cured!" I hastened to get some book to read. I took up, as was right, the account of the apparition, which was lying on

* 'Qu'on juge de mon saisissement, j'allais presque dire de mon épouvante! A peine avais-je touché de cette eau miraculeuse mes yeux et mon front, que je me sentis guéri tout-à-coup, brusquement, sans transition, avec une soudaineté que, dans mon langage imparfait, je ne puis comparer qu'à celle de la foudre.'

my mantelpiece, and I read 104 pages (that is the entire of the book) without the least fatigue. Twenty minutes before I could not have read three lines consecutively.

'On that same evening I went to confession, and informed the Abbé Ferrand of the favour which the blessed Virgin had bestowed upon me. Although I had not made much preparation, as I told him, he desired that I should receive holy Communion the next morning, to thank God for so especial and extraordinary a favour, and to strengthen in my heart the good resolutions inspired by such an event. My cure took place on October 10, 1862. Since that period to this date, March 1869, my sight has been excellent; neither long reading nor hard work, nor nightly vigils, cause me the least inconvenience. Although I have been but too often unmindful of the wonderful favour bestowed on me, I have not been punished by the slightest relapse. There are, however, two great graces for which I still pray and hope—the correction of my own heart, always weak and miserable, and the conversion of my friend and his wife. That this latter will be accomplished I firmly believe. As he has been the remote instrument of my physical recovery, it is probable that the Almighty has permitted this miracle to have been performed in my favour, in order that *their* eyes may be opened to that eternal light which shines only in the Catholic Church.'

On the occasion of my first visit to Lourdes, May 26, 1868, I had the privilege of an introduction to M. Henri Lasserre. It was in the simple drawing-room of the fathers of Garaison, who had entertained the priests accompanying the pilgrimage of ladies and women from Bayonne. He was surrounded by a goodly mass of pious and enlightened clergymen, to whom he was speaking with much animation on the subject of his history of the apparitions, of which the first numbers had recently been published in the 'Revue du Monde catholique.' Among them was the great Curé of Lourdes, to whom also I had the privilege of being presented.

The broad noble forehead, the expansive beaming countenance, the cordial manner, the incisive argument and brilliant illustration of his conversation, and the profound conviction which inspired every word that alluded to religion or the blessed Virgin, impressed me with a strong sympathy for M. Lasserre. As I have said, he was then engaged upon his work on 'Our Lady of Lourdes,' from which I have drawn largely in this account; and which, I need not add, has much enhanced my estimation of him as a Catholic and a writer. It is an offering which he makes in thanksgiving for his recovery, to hang up as one of the rarest that adorn the sanctuary of Massabielle. I had proposed to revisit the Curé of Lourdes, and crave his assistance in my own labours; but a threatened bereavement in my family at home called me suddenly from his neighbourhood, and deprived me of the advantage of his more intimate acquaintance.

When we consider these cases, especially the seven earliest, which have been declared by two eminent physicians impossible through the operation of natural causes, we cannot fail to be impressed with wonder, if not with conviction. They exhibit, each and all, a complete contradiction of ordinary therapeutic action, and are opposed to the precepts and previsions of medical science. How are we to reconcile these contradictions; the simplicity of the means, and the greatness of the results; the identity of the remedy, and yet the diversity of the disease; the immediate operation of the curative agent, and the long duration of ineffective treatment by medical art; the sudden efficaciousness of the first, and the prolonged inutility of the second; in nearly all instances the chronic nature of the malady and the instantaneousness of the recovery? Must we not conclude that there was a power at work superior to that which has been given to nature, and which cannot belong to the qualities of the water which had been made the instrument? Assuredly, these are observations which will strike the most sceptical of

my readers, and lead them to accept the authenticated cures which I have laid before them, as beyond the efforts of art and the calculations of science, and therefore rightly adopted in the category of the supernatural and miraculous.

The extraordinary cures, adopted as such by the Commission, are not the only cases which have been authenticated by them. I hope that I have recorded sufficient to convince the pious, to interest the incredulous, and to extend in my own language and country the glory and the greatness of our blessed LADY OF LOURDES. The eloquent Abbé Alix of Paris, in his discourse at the inauguration of the statue, says: 'I, who address you, can tell you of many miracles worked within my own knowledge, by the invocation of our Lady of Lourdes, and by the use of the waters of the grotto. I come from a distance, from a mighty city where miracles do not abound; where they are rejected by the double barrier of doubt that distrusts, and of science that denies. And yet, notwithstanding this, our Lady of Lourdes has wrought miracles even in Paris. Those who have seen them have believed; and in homage of their gratitude and love they have come even here, that your faith and theirs may be increased and strengthened together.' *

The object of this history requires that we go back somewhat in our narrative. It has been seen that the Bishop of Tarbes was extremely cautious in taking any action regarding Bernadette or the apparitions. The Commission having made its report, he could no longer delay to pronounce his episcopal judgment. The following is the *mandement* or pastoral which he addressed to his clergy and flock. Its importance requires that I should embody it without curtailment in this record.

'BERTRAND-SÉVÈRE LAURENCE, by the divine grace and favour of the Holy Apostolic See Bishop of Tarbes, As-

* *Discours pour l'inauguration de la bénédiction solennelle de la statue de la Très-Sainte Vierge dans la grotte miraculeuse de Lourdes.* Par M. l'abbé Alix, du clergé de Paris, etc., p. 35.

sistant at the Pontifical Throne, &c. To the clergy and faithful of our diocese, health and benediction in our Lord Jesus Christ.

'Throughout every epoch of human history, well-beloved brethren and most dear fellow-labourers, extraordinary communications have been held between Heaven and earth. In the beginning of the world the Lord appeared to our first parents to reprove their crime of disobedience. During the following ages we find that He held conversation with the patriarchs and prophets, and the Old Testament is frequently but the history of the celestial apparitions by which the children of Israel were favoured.

'These divine favours ought not to cease with the Mosaic law; on the contrary, they might be expected to be more numerous and more striking under the law of grace. From the cradle of the Church, in the days of bloody persecution, Christians were visited by Jesus Christ or by angels, who came sometimes to reveal to them the secrets of the future, sometimes to deliver them from chains, sometimes to strengthen them in their combat. Thus it was, according to a judicious writer, that God encouraged those illustrious confessors of the faith when the powerful of the earth were combining all their efforts to stifle in its bud the doctrine which was to save the world. Nor were these supernatural manifestations the inheritance exclusively of the early ages of Christianity. History attests that they have been perpetuated from age to age for the glory of religion and the edification of the faithful.

'Among these celestial apparitions those of the most blessed Virgin occupy a large place, and they have been to the world an abundant source of blessings. In visiting Catholic countries throughout the universe, the traveller meets, within short distances, oratories consecrated to the Mother of God; many of these monuments owe their origin to the apparition of the Queen of Heaven at that spot. We already possess one of these holy sanctuaries,

founded four centuries ago, in consequence of a revelation made to a young shepherdess, where thousands of pilgrims go every year to kneel before the throne of the glorious Virgin Mary and implore her favours.*

'Thanks be given to the Almighty! In the infinite treasures of his goodness He has reserved to us a new favour. He desires that in the diocese of Tarbes a new sanctuary should be erected to the glory of Mary. And what is the instrument of which He makes use to communicate to us the designs of his mercy? It is again that which is the feeblest according to the world†—a child of fourteen years, Bernadette Soubirous, born at Lourdes, of a poor family.

'It was the 11th of February, 1858.‡ Bernadette was gathering dry wood on the banks of the Gave, in company of one of her sisters, aged eleven years, and another little girl aged thirteen years. She had reached the front of the grotto called Massabielle, when, in the midst of the silence of nature, she heard a noise resembling a rush of wind ("coup de vent"). She looked at the right side of the river, which was bordered with poplars, but she saw that they were motionless. The noise having again struck her ears, she turned towards the grotto. She perceived on the brink of the rock, in a kind of niche, at the side of a bush which was moving, a Lady, who made her a sign to approach. Her countenance was of ravishing beauty; she was clothed in white, with a blue girdle, a white veil on her head, and a yellow rose on each of her feet. At this sight Bernadette was troubled: thinking that she was the victim of an illusion, she rubbed her eyes, but the object became more and more distinct. Then instinctively she fell upon her knees, took out her beads, which she recited, and when the child had finished her prayers the Apparition had vanished.

'Whether from a secret inspiration or at the instigation

* Our Lady of Garaison.

† 'And the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong.'—1 Cor. i. 27.

‡ About 2 o'clock P.M.

of her companions, to whom she had communicated what she had seen, Bernadette returned to the grotto on the following Sunday and Thursday, and each time the same phenomenon was renewed. On the Sunday, in order to assure herself whether this mysterious being came on the part of the Lord, the young girl sprinkled holy water three times about her, for which she received from her a look full of sweetness and tenderness. On the Thursday the Apparition spoke to Bernadette; she told her to come there during the following fifteen days, to drink and wash herself in the fountain, and to eat an herb which she would find there. The girl, not seeing any water in the grotto, was taking her way towards the Gave, when the Apparition recalled her, and told her to go to the extremity of the grotto, to the spot which she indicated with her finger. The child obeyed, but she found nothing save a slight moisture on the earth. She immediately began to make a little hole with her hands, which became filled with muddy water; she drank and washed and ate of a kind of cress which was growing in that place.

'When this act of obedience had been accomplished, the Apparition spoke again to Bernadette. She desired her to go and tell the priests that she wished that a chapel should be built to her honour at the place where she had appeared, and the child hastened to the curé to deliver the message. She had been invited to return to the grotto for the space of fifteen days. She responded faithfully to the invitation, and each day, with the exception of two, she beheld the same spectacle, in presence of an innumerable crowd, which had collected before the grotto, but which neither saw nor heard anything. During this fortnight the Apparition several times directed Bernadette to drink and wash in the place she had already pointed out; she recommended her to pray for sinners, and repeated her desire that a chapel should be built. On her side, Bernadette enquired who she was, but the only answer she received was a gracious smile.

'The fortnight for her visits was terminated. However,

two other apparitions took place, one on March 25, the day of the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin, and the other on April 5. The day of the Annunciation, Bernadette asked the mysterious being three times who it was ("qui il était"). Thereupon the Apparition lifted up its hands, joined them across the top of its chest, raised its eyes to heaven, and cried out, with an ineffable smile, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

'Such, in substance, is the recital which we have gathered from the mouth of Bernadette, in presence of the Commission at its second meeting. Thus, this young girl saw and heard a being that called itself the Immaculate Conception, and which, although assuming a human form, was neither seen nor heard by any of the numerous spectators who were present. Consequently, it must be a supernatural being. What are we to think of this event?

'You are not ignorant, my dear brethren, that the Church in its wisdom is very slow in pronouncing its judgments upon supernatural events. She requires certain proof before she can admit and proclaim them to be divine. From the beginning man is prone to many errors, especially in similar matters. If he is not led astray by his enfeebled reason, he may be the victim of the Devil's artifices. Who does not know that occasionally he has transformed himself into an angel of light, that we may fall the more readily into his snares?* Thus, the beloved disciple recommends us not to believe in any spirit until it has been proved that the spirit comes from God.† This proof we have acquired, dearly beloved brethren. The event of which we treat has been, during four years, the object of our solicitude. We have followed it through its different phases; we have drawn our information from the Commission, composed of pious, enlightened, and experienced priests, who have interrogated the child, studied the facts, and duly weighed and sifted the entire matter. We have

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

† 'Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.'—1 John iv. 1.

called to our aid also the authority of science, and we have been fully convinced that the apparition is supernatural and divine; and consequently that what Bernadette saw was the blessed Virgin. This conviction has been proved to us on the evidence of Bernadette, but above all on the facts that have been proved, and which cannot be explained except through divine intervention.*

'The evidence of the young girl presents all the guarantees that we could desire. In the first place, her sincerity does not admit of doubt. Who that has approached her does not admire the simplicity, candour, and modesty of this child? While everyone was discussing the wonders that had been revealed to her, she alone preserved silence. She never spoke except when questioned; and then she would recount everything without affectation and with touching ingenuousness. To the numberless questions that were addressed to her, she would, without hesitation, give clear and precise answers to the point, and marked by her own deep conviction. Submitted to searching trials, she has never been shaken by threats; and to the most generous offers she has replied by a noble disinterestedness. Always consistent with herself in the various interrogatories to which she has been subjected, she has undeviatingly maintained that which she said at the first, neither adding too nor taking from it. The truthfulness of Bernadette, then, is incontestable. Let us add that it has not been contested. Her opponents themselves, when she has had any, have rendered this homage to her.

'But, although Bernadette may not have wished to deceive, is it not possible that she herself may have been deceived? May she not have believed that she saw and heard that which she neither heard nor saw? Has she not been the victim of some hallucination? But how can we think that? The wisdom of her answers discloses in this

* 'Nous sommes demeurés convaincus que l'apparition est surnaturelle et divine, et que, par conséquent, ce que Bernadette a vu, c'est la Très-Sainte Vierge. Notre conviction s'est formée sur le témoignage de Bernadette, mais surtout d'après les faits qui se sont produits, et qui ne peuvent être expliqués que par une intervention divine.'

child an upright spirit, a calm imagination, and a degree of good sense beyond her age. There never had been any exaltation in her religious sentiments; and no one has been able to discover in her intellectual disorder, perversion of reason, singularity of character, or morbidness of feeling, which could have predisposed her to fanciful imaginings. She saw the vision not once only, but on eighteen different occasions. She saw it at first unexpectedly, at a time when nothing had occurred to prepare her for it; but during the fortnight when she must have expected to see it every day, there were two days upon which it did not appear to her, although everything in time, place, and circumstance was identical. And then what happened during these apparitions? A transformation took place in Bernadette; her countenance received a new expression, her looks glowed ("son regard s'enflammait"); she beheld things that she had never before seen: she heard a language that she had never before heard, and of which she did not comprehend the meaning, but of which, notwithstanding, she preserved the recollection. These circumstances combined forbid the supposition of any hallucination. Therefore, the young girl really saw and heard a being which called itself the Immaculate Conception; and it not being possible to explain this phenomenon in any natural way, we are justified in believing that the apparition was supernatural.

'The evidence of Bernadette, important as it is in itself, borrows new support, we would almost say is confirmed and completed, by the marvellous facts accomplished after the first event. If we may judge the tree by its fruits, we are entitled to say that the apparition reported by her was supernatural and divine; inasmuch as it produced effects supernatural and divine. What happened, beloved brethren? The apparition scarcely had been announced, when the news spread with the rapidity of lightning. It was known that Bernadette had engaged to visit the grotto daily during a fortnight, and immediately the entire country becomes agitated; the people, like a wave, preci-

pitate themselves towards the place where the apparition was expected. They wait with devout impatience for the solemn moment; and while the child in ecstasy is absorbed in contemplation of the vision, the witnesses of the prodigy, excited and subdued, bow down in one common sentiment of wonder and of prayer.

'The apparitions have ceased, but the concourse of the people continues. Pilgrims from distant lands, as well as from the neighbouring districts, crowd to the grotto; all ages, ranks, and conditions press upon one another in their eager devotion. And what is the sentiment that impels these countless visitors? Ah! they come to the grotto to pray, and to ask some favour from Mary Immaculate. They show by their recollected attitude that they feel that a breath of divinity ("un souffle divin") has animated this rock, henceforth for ever celebrated. Souls, already Christian, are fortified in virtue; men, hardened by indifference, are brought back to the practice of religion; obstinate sinners, after having invoked the intercession of our Lady of Lourdes, suddenly become reconciled to God. These miracles of grace, stamped with the character of universality and perseverance, can have God only for their author: do they not, therefore, confirm the truth of the apparition?

'If, from the effects produced for the good of souls, we pass to those which concern the health of the body, what new prodigies have we not to relate? They had seen Bernadette drink and wash at the spot pointed out by the Apparition. This circumstance aroused public attention, and men asked if this was not an indication that some supernatural virtue had been communicated to the fountain of Massabielle. In this idea the sick tried the waters, and not without success. Many, whose infirmities had resisted the most energetic treatment, suddenly recovered their health. These extraordinary cures were reported far and near, and the echo of them was quickly heard at a distance. Sick from all countries, if they were unable to be transported to the grotto, sent for the water

of Massabielle. How many infirm restored, how many families consoled! If we required their evidence, innumerable voices would be raised to proclaim with gratitude the sovereign efficaciousness of the water of the grotto. We cannot enumerate all the favours that have been obtained; but that which we are bound to say is, that the water of Massabielle has cured sick persons, who had been given up and pronounced incurable. These cures have been performed by the use of a water that does not possess any natural curative quality, according to the report of eminent chemists, by whom it has been carefully analysed. They have been worked sometimes instantaneously, sometimes after using the water twice or thrice, either as a drink or as a lotion. Further, all these cures have been permanent. What, then, is the power which has produced them? Is it any organic power ("la puissance de l'organisme")? Science, when consulted, has replied in the negative. Therefore these cures are the work of God. Now they all have strict reference to the apparition: that is the epoch of their commencement. That it is which inspired the confidence of the sick. There is, then, a close connection between these cures and the apparition; therefore the apparition is divine, inasmuch as the cures are marked with a stamp that is divine. But that which comes from God is truth. Consequently, the Apparition calling itself the Immaculate Conception, that which Bernadette saw and heard, is the MOST BLESSED VIRGIN! Let us therefore cry out, "The finger of God is here" ("Digitus Dei est hic").

'How ought we to admire, dearly beloved brethren, the economy of divine Providence! At the close of the year 1854 the immortal Pius IX. proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The words of the Pontiff were echoed to the ends of the earth; joy thrilled every Catholic heart, and the glorious privilege of Mary everywhere was celebrated by festivals, the recollection of which must ever remain engraven upon our memory. About three years after this the blessed Virgin, appearing to a child, says to

her, "I am the Immaculate Conception, and I wish that a chapel should be constructed here in my honour." Does it not seem as if she desired to consecrate by a monument the infallible utterance of the successor of St. Peter?

'And where does she wish that this monument should be erected? At the foot of our Pyrenean mountains, in a country visited by numerous strangers from all parts of the world who seek health at our mineral springs. Might not one say that she invites the faithful of all nations to come and do her honour in the new temple which is to be built at her command? Inhabitants of the city of Lourdes, I call upon you to rejoice! The august Mary deigns to look down upon you with her merciful favour. She desires that near your city should be constructed a sanctuary, where she will abundantly pour forth her graces. Thank Her for this proof of predilection in your regard; and, since she is thus prodigal in her maternal tenderness towards you, show yourselves to be her devoted clients by your imitation of her virtues and by your invincible attachment to religion.

'Furthermore (and we love to acknowledge it), the apparition already has borne abundant fruits of salvation among you. Eye-witnesses as you have been of the occurrences at the grotto and their happy consequences, your confidence has equalled your conviction. We have admired your prudence, your docility in following our advice, your submission to the civil authorities, when, during some weeks, you were compelled to discontinue your visits to the grotto, and bury in your hearts the sentiments which had been inspired by the wonderful spectacle that you had witnessed during that mysterious fortnight.

'And you, my well-beloved flock, throughout the entire diocese, open out your hearts in hope. A new era of peace has commenced for you; you all are called to receive your portion of the blessings which have been promised to us. Henceforth, in your hymns, you will unite the name of our Lady of Lourdes with the blessed names of our Lady of Garaison, of Poëylahun, of Héas, and of

Piétat. From the summit of these sacred sanctuaries the Immaculate Virgin will watch over you and cover you with her tutelary protection. Yes! beloved fellow-labourers and brethren, if, with hearts full of confidence, we keep our eyes fixed upon this "star of the sea," we shall traverse without shipwreck the tempestuous ocean of life, and arrive in safety at the port of eternal happiness.

'For these reasons, having conferred with our venerable brethren the dignitaries, canons, and chapter of our cathedral church, and invoked the holy name of God, and following the rules wisely laid down by Benedict XIV. in his work on the beatification and canonisation of saints, and for the right discernment of true and false apparitions,* considering the report which has been presented to us by the Commission charged with enquiring into the apparition at the grotto of Lourdes and all the facts connected with it;

'Considering, in the first place, that the fact of the apparition, regarded whether in reference to the young girl who reported it, or to the extraordinary effects which it has produced, can only be explained by the intervention of a supernatural cause;

'Considering, in the second place, that this cause cannot be other than divine, because the effects produced, some of them being sensible signs of grace, such as the conversion of sinners, others being deviations from the laws of nature, such as miraculous cures, which can be referred only to the Author of grace and the Master of nature;

'Considering, finally, that our conviction is strengthened by the immense and spontaneous concourse of the faithful to the grotto—a concourse which has never ceased since the first apparitions, and whose sole object is to ask favours or return thanks for those already obtained;

'And that we may respond to the legitimate impatience of our venerable chapter, of the clergy and laity of our diocese, who have long demanded that the ecclesiastical authorities should pronounce their decision, but which,

* Liv. iii. cap. 51.

through motives of prudence, we have hitherto withheld, and desiring also to satisfy the wishes of many of our colleagues in the episcopacy and of a large number of distinguished persons outside our diocese;

'And having invoked the light of the Holy Ghost and the assistance of the ever blessed Virgin, we have declared and declare as follows:—

'Art. 1. We pronounce that MARY IMMACULATE, MOTHER OF GOD, did really appear to Bernadette Soubirous, on February 11, 1858, and on the following days, to the number of eighteen times, in the grotto of Massabielle, near the city of Lourdes; that this apparition possesses all the characters of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing it with certainty.* We humbly submit this our judgment to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, who is charged with the government of the Universal Church.

'Art. 2. We authorise in our diocese the veneration (*culte*) of our Lady of the grotto of Lourdes; but we forbid the publication of any particular formula of prayers, canticle, or book of devotion, without our approbation in writing.

'Art. 3. To conform ourselves to the wish of the blessed Virgin, several times expressed during the apparitions, we propose to build a sanctuary on the land of the grotto, which has become the property of the bishops of Tarbes. In consequence of the difficulties of the site, this building will be a work of much time and considerable cost. Thus, to realise our pious project, we shall need the assistance not only of the clergy and faithful of our diocese, but that of all France and of foreign countries. We appeal to their generous hearts, and particularly to those pious persons of all countries who are devoted to the veneration of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. All those who may desire to co-operate in this work are re-

* 'Nous jugeons que *l'Immaculée Marie, Mère de Dieu*, a réellement apparu à Bernadette Soubirous, le 11 février 1858, et jours suivants, au nombre de dix-huit fois, dans la grotte de Massabielle, près la ville de Lourdes; que cette apparition revêt tous les caractères de la vérité, et que les fidèles sont fondés à la croire certaine.'

quested to send their offerings, if in our diocese, to their respective curés; if in other dioceses, to the secretary of the bishop, who will receive them, or to ourselves directly.

'Art. 4. We address ourselves with confidence to the establishments connected with the education of the youth of both sexes, to the congregations of the children of Mary, to the confraternities of the blessed Virgin, and to all other religious associations throughout France as well as in our own diocese.

'Art. 5. Any parish, corporation, school, religious community, confraternity, or individual who shall themselves give or collect from others a sum of 500 francs, shall have the title of *Founder of the Sanctuary of the grotto of Lourdes.* If the offerings amount to 20 francs and over, the title will be that of *principal benefactor.* The names of the founders and principal benefactors should be transmitted with the offerings; they will be preciously preserved in a register for that purpose; moreover, the names will be deposited in a silver heart, which will be placed on the high altar of the sanctuary. Weekly and in perpetuity there will be celebrated in this sanctuary on Wednesday two Masses for the founders and principal benefactors, and on Friday a Mass for all those who, by their contributions, however small, shall have assisted in its construction. It is not without some especial design of love and mercy that the blessed Virgin has required the erection of a sanctuary to her honour in this place. Consequently there can be no doubt that all those who shall contribute to the erection of this monument will receive in return some signal favour, whether in the spiritual or temporal order.

'Art. 6. A great number of persons, from various parts of France and from other countries, as well as from our diocese, have received extraordinary favours at the grotto of Lourdes. Many of these have promised to send us their offerings as soon as it should be decided to build the sanctuary. To these we announce that the time has come. We beg, further, that they will recommend this

work to their acquaintance, and receive, if the opportunity presents itself, all such gifts, and transmit them to us.

'Art. 7. A Commission of priests and laymen will be appointed to watch over the employment of these funds, under our direction.

'Art. 8. This our pastoral letter shall be read in all the churches, chapels, oratories, colleges, and hospitals in our diocese on the Sunday after it shall have been received.

'Given at Tarbes, in our Episcopal Palace, under our hand and seal, and the countersign of our secretary, the 18th January, 1864, Feast of the Chair of St. Peter.

'BERTRAND-S^RE^, Bishop of Tarbes.

'By command, FOURCADE, Canon, Secretary.'

It is unnecessary to say that the effect produced by the publication of the foregoing elaborate pastoral was one of unbounded satisfaction to the Catholics of Lourdes and the diocese, who rejoiced to find the sanction of episcopal judgment conferred upon the great event by which their town and neighbourhood had been illustrated. Thenceforward, under the protection of the ecclesiastical authority, the faith and devotion of the pilgrim might rest upon a sure foundation, and the sneers of the infidel objector would perish as the stubble before the flame. It now became incumbent upon the venerable prelate, who pronounced a judgment so decisive, not to neglect any suitable means within his reach to circulate and perpetuate the facts which he had authenticated by his solemn and deliberate approval. In the name of the bishopric, representing the entire Church, Mgr. Laurence purchased, from the municipality of Lourdes, the grotto and the land which surrounds it, together with the entire group of the Massabielle rocks. It was M. Lacadé, the mayor, who proposed that the council should cede to the bishop that spot, for ever sacred, where the Mother of God had manifested herself. It was he who signed the deed of sale. M. Rouland, then Minister of Public Works, authorised the sale, and gave his official permission to the erection of

a church in everlasting memorial of the apparition of the most blessed Virgin to Bernadette Soubirous, and of the numerous miracles which attested the truth of these divine visions. What a change in the views and decrees of the mayor and the minister! It reads almost like a romance.

While the vast temple, commemorative of the Immaculate Conception, on the abrupt rock of Massabielle, is rising stone upon stone from its stupendous foundation, our Lady of Lourdes continues to pour forth unlimited favours and graces. At Paris, at Bordeaux, at Toulouse, in Perigord, in distant Brittany, in ancient Anjou, our Lady of Lourdes is invoked, and in all places she has answered her suppliants by undeniable results of her power and goodness. In England and Ireland alone is she almost a stranger, and great will be the reward of the present writer if his humble but affectionate labour shall bear fruit, and through the divine blessing become the means of directing the steps of his countrymen to this abounding fountain of grace and mercy!

By degrees the land about the grotto was made level and laid out with suitable taste; an esplanade created in front by the sand that was taken from the bed of the river was covered with green sods, and rendered an agreeable place of repose for the visitors; a large iron grating was placed before the grotto, and a handsome marble basin erected for the fountain, into which it now pours itself through three distinct spouts or tubes, pouring forth no less than 122,000 litres in the course of the day. On the front of the basin is the following inscription:—

'VA BOIRE ET TE LAVER À CETTE FONTAINE.'
Paroles de la Sainte Vierge à Bernadette, le XIV *février*, A.D. 1858.

One of the first objects with the bishop was to place in the niche wherein our Lady had appeared to Bernadette a marble statue, whose workmanship and quality should typify the loveliness of her who had deigned to reveal herself to a poor ignorant girl in that secluded spot.

This was accomplished on April 4, 1864, six years after the date of the apparition. This statue was modelled after the description minutely given by Bernadette to the artist. The city of Lourdes was decorated with flowers, garlands, banners, and triumphal arches. The bells sent out a merry peal from all the churches, chapels, and convents. The troops, with all the pomp of military display, headed the procession, and these were followed by the entire congregations of religious bodies and schools, which, as our readers will recollect, abound in that good town. More than twenty thousand pilgrims were present, all animated by the same spirit of holy joy and gratitude.

But there were two personages absent whose presence would have given a personal lustre to the function beyond any that the mere splendour of ceremonial could convey. Bernadette should have had her place among the 'Children of Mary,' but at the moment that this rejoicing multitude was about to adorn the niche at Massabielle with a statue of Her who had made it her resting-place, she, to whom the vision had been vouchsafed, was lying on a bed of suffering in the hospital, and unable to take any part in a celebration of which she might be said to have been the chosen originator. The Curé of Lourdes, also, at that hour was stretched on a couch of pain, watched by two Sisters of Charity, and a prey to much physical suffering. He made an effort to get up, that he might see from his window the procession as it passed, but his strength failed him, and he was unable to obtain even a transitory glimpse of that triumphant array, the object of which had been so long to him a subject of anxiety and apprehension.

The Abbé C. Alix, of Paris, delivered an eloquent discourse upon the occasion, from which I would willingly make some extracts, did I not feel that this account already has exceeded the limits which I had assigned. I will therefore content myself with referring my readers to the discourse itself, which merits attentive perusal as a masterpiece of pulpit oratory and an irrefutable argument on the credibility and truth of the apparition of

Lourdes. This discourse is especially interesting, as it treats at length not alone the particular question of the apparition in the grotto of Massabielle, but also the further question of apparitions generally, as they affect and disturb the order of nature and consist with divine economy in its dealings with mankind.

When the sermon was finished, an immense procession was again formed, and advanced to the grotto. Then the bishop solemnly blessed the statue; M. Alix delivered a few glowing words of exhortation and exultation, when there arose from that vast multitude, as if from one voice, a majestic canticle of jubilation, that was borne aloft to the startled echoes, and by them conveyed to the highest vaults of heaven. The statue is of the purest Carrara marble, and was executed by M. Fabisch, an eminent sculptor of Lyons. It is the gift of two noble and pious sisters of that diocese, who desired thus to record their devotion to Mary, and their gratitude for graces and privileges received at her grotto of Lourdes. The expression of this statue is undoubtedly admirable and imposing. It is in the position described by Bernadette at the moment when she joined her hands, and, smiling, disclosed her name and quality. Underneath, on the base, is the inscription,—

'JE SUIS L'IMMACULÉE CONCEPTION.'

But the devout pilgrim needs no inscription to comprehend its character and object. It tells, of itself, the mysteries of the grotto. Gazing upon it, one almost feels as if Mary was there present; trusting confidence in Her grows warmer and warmer; soothing contemplation penetrates the soul as it bows in homage beneath the azure temple of the skies; and one must be very cold and very selfish if many a sigh, and many an aspiration for his own weal and others' salvation, do not ascend to God while one kneels at the foot of that most eloquent image!

The next step to be taken towards the fulfilment of the command conveyed through Bernadette, 'Tell the priests

that I wish that a chapel should be built in my honour in this place,' was to lay the foundations thereof and consecrate them. This was done by Mgr. Laurence on May 16, 1866. A warrior of the days of Abderahma or of Charlemagne would have been astonished if he could have beheld the houses draped with banners and the streets carpeted with flowers and garlands, and was told that these insignia of triumph were to celebrate the commencement of a temple to be erected to Mary Immaculate, and not the victories of some mighty captain returning from the wars. But so it was that day in Lourdes. The Grotto of the Apparition was the centre of attraction; it had now become a graceful sanctuary, in front of which the holy sacrifice of the Mass was to be offered for the first time that day. Before the beautiful statue of the Immaculate Conception a rich and tasteful altar was erected, over which was suspended the oriflamme of our Lady of Lourdes. The nave of the temple extended to the horizon, its roof was the deep blue sky of the Pyrenees, and its floor the daisied meadows around. In nature's own cathedral, at the foot of these glorious mountains, Mass was celebrated for the first time at Massabielle.

From an early hour the large enclosure was filled with worshippers. The railroad brought thousands, and still many were left behind. The highways swarmed with pilgrims on foot and visitors in carriages. More than fifty thousand had assembled to be present at the *fête* of Mary Immaculate. The procession issued from the parish church at Lourdes at ten in the morning. It was preceded by a body of sappers as a guard of honour; and then came the various congregations and religious sodalities, with their crosses and banners; and these were followed by the students of the seminary of Tarbes, accompanied by four hundred priests. Last came the bishop in his pontifical robes, surrounded by the dignitaries and canons of his cathedral. No imagination can adequately realise such a scene, on such an occasion, to those readers who never have witnessed the pomp and beauty of popular

devotion in Catholic countries: for those who have witnessed them, I need not dwell upon the details. They will find them graphically given in the local journals of the period.

When Mass was finished, one of the missionaries of the diocese, the reverend Father Duboë, a young and gifted preacher, ascended the pulpit. At that moment the thunder rolled along the hills in loud and terrifying peals: every eye and ear turned from the preacher, appalled by the loud clamour and brilliant flashes by which the skies were troubled. But, while the storm burst in torrents of rain on the country about, it hung as if in suspense over the grotto; and as the orator proceeded with his magnificent discourse, the elements themselves seemed controlled by the solemnity of the occasion, and expended their fury upon the neighbouring plains. The effect of this incident is powerfully described by the 'Journal de Lourdes,' the writer concluding, 'While my eye contemplated these dark clouds, my soul, sad but confident, seemed to witness the outburst of that more fearful tempest which threatens the Church and the world.'*

I remember once at Boulogne-sur-Mer to have witnessed a somewhat similar scene, that has rested ever upon my memory. It was evening, and a Redemptorist father was preaching in the cathedral, which at that time had not yet been opened for general service. In the midst of his sermon the thunder suddenly burst over the building and shook its foundations; the lightning almost clove the columns, and repeatedly seemed to pass athwart the body of the preacher; the women, young and old, were in tears or in hysterics; but no one dared to stir, so dense was the crowd, and so nervous the alarm. The preacher alone remained calm and undisturbed throughout the whole of his discourse—alone unmoved by the elemental war that terrified and distracted his auditors.

* 'Tandis que mon œil considérait ces sombres nuages, mon âme, triste mais confiante, croyait voir apparaître la tempête plus redoutable qui ménace l'Église et la société.'

Supported in the air, as if upon Cyclopean foundations, which resemble in their strength the ramparts of some impregnable citadel, the chapel, which the blessed Virgin ordered to be built in her honour, is placed on the summit of the rock, almost over the grotto. Those who have not seen the locality in its original condition, as it has been described at the opening of this account, cannot form any idea of the difficulty and labour necessary to give the church a foundation. This monument will be composed of two churches in the Gothic style, one placed above and resting upon the other. The subterranean church, or crypt, is already finished. One enters by two large long vaulted galleries. The first impression is one of astonishment: a forest of pillars and arches, crossing each other at every point, supports a low ceiling. Through these multiplied archings the various altars are half seen, whilst the light of day streams dimly through the narrow windows. The effect is bewildering, until the eye gradually grows accustomed to it, and then one discovers the most admirable harmony in all that apparent confusion. A line of confessionals is placed along the wall at the western extremity; and as these are generally surrounded by groups of penitents, words are not needed to impress upon the visitor the obligations and the privileges of the place.

The plan of the chapel is of that peculiar type of which the Cathedral of Alby is the best known example: a nave flanked by ten lateral chapels in place of aisles, and terminating in a *chevet*, with five polygonal chapels. Two sacristies are substituted for the chapels of the first or parallel bay of the choir, which is wider than the bays of the nave. The crypt, occupying the width of the nave above, is divided into a nave and aisles by fourteen pairs of coupled marble columns, with stone base and capital common to each pair. The capitals are carved with foliage, and support archivolts and vaulting ribs, also of white stone, the ribs of the aisle-vaults resting on shafts engaged in the wall. The sacristies and chapels of the *chevet* are repeated in the crypt. The centre chapel is that of our

Lady; those on the north, of the Sacred Heart and St. Peter; and, on the south, of St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist.

The architecture of the crypt is not overloaded with ornament. All is simple, grand, and solid; such as befits a structure whose strength has been multiplied to sustain the immense weight overhead. The general character of the crypt is solemn and severe, producing upon the mind a profoundly religious impression. I know few places in which recollection and prayer seem to be more spontaneous and congenial. A tower and spire are intended to stand at the west end, over the grotto, rising to the height of two hundred and twenty feet. The internal length of the church is about 145 feet, by a width of 66 feet, of which the nave occupies exactly half—that is, 33 feet.

The church itself has advanced far towards completion;* the walls already have reached their intended height, and are fit to receive the roof; and, even at this stage, some idea may be formed of its future grandeur. The external appearances are very remarkable; and when regarded from the banks of the Gave, rising up perpendicularly from the solid rock, its aspect is grand and imposing, and, as I believe, not equalled, certainly not surpassed, by any other church or temple in the world. The boldness of the undertaking, the enormous expenditure, which already exceeds the estimate; the natural difficulties that had to be overcome; the grandeur of that which has been accomplished, combine to prove how much may be done by zeal and perseverance, animated by love and faith. Nobly and fitly have the bishop and clergy of the diocese of Tarbes responded to the desire of our Lady that a chapel should be erected to her honour in that spot.

I should fail in justice to the Abbé Peyramale if I omitted to mention that it was he who laid the foundation and commenced the construction of this church. It was to him that the command had been delivered by Berna-

* I visited it for the last time in October 1868.

dette, and he eagerly devoted his energies to its performance. The first thing to be done was to procure a suitable plan and design. One day, standing in front of the grotto, and surrounded by a group of priests and laymen, the architect, M. Durand, showed him the design of a charming little church. The curé looked at it, and his countenance suddenly became inflamed; with a rapid gesture he crumpled up the plan, tore it, and flung it in bits into the Gave.

'What are you doing?' cried the stupefied architect.

'You see,' replied the priest. 'I blush that human meanness should presume to offer such a structure to the Mother of God, and I have destroyed the unworthy conception. That which we require, in commemoration of the great events which have been accomplished here, is not a narrow village church; it is a temple of marble as large as the summit of Massabielle will sustain, as magnificent as your genius can create. Go back, my friend, and let nothing be too daring for your pencil. We require from you a *chef-d'œuvre*; and, if you possessed the talent of Michael Angelo, it still would be unworthy of that which we celebrate here.'

'But, M. le Curé,' cried out everyone, 'millions will be necessary to do what you say.'

'She who from this barren rock called forth a living spring will open the generous hands of the faithful,' was his reply. 'Proceed, and have no fears on that account. "Why do you tremble, O ye men of little faith?"'

The idea that pervaded the mind of Abbé Peyramale was that the grotto should be preserved, for the veneration of future ages, in the condition in which it was at the period of the apparitions, when the presence of Mary rendered it for ever sacred as her shrine; free and open to the heavens, occupying the same space, exposed to the same azure sky, watered by the same murmuring Gave, surrounded by the same meadows, glades, hills, and horizon. In elevating the building on the summit of the rock it would be accepted as the triumphant throne of the

Immaculate Conception. A vast and noble basilica, lifted up into the air, reflected in the waters beneath, dominating the valley and the hillocks, it would encircle like a crown the brow of Massabielle, and become imperishable evidence of the visits and the revelations of the blessed Virgin at that spot.

However, the obstacles were considerable; there was no space on the rock sufficient for a church, but this did not frighten the energetic curé. He caused to be erected a high Cyclopean wall, rising from the bottom of the precipice, and thus enlarged the area of the rock, so as to constitute an artificial platform, adequate to the proposed length and breadth of the church. The effect of these foundations, when seen from the banks of the river below, is absolutely stupendous. After much labour and study, M. Durand, the diocesan architect, succeeded in producing the design of a Gothic structure of imposing proportions, to be built upon a crypt, and to be surmounted by a lofty spire, which should support a cross at an elevation of more than three hundred feet above the level of the Gave. To complete such a monument it was calculated that no less than a million of francs, or four hundred thousand pounds, would be required, besides considerable time and persevering energy and courage, aided by eminent architectural talent. But had not the blessed Virgin said to Bernadette, 'Tell the priests that I desire that a church shall be built here in my honour'? Although all human means were wanting, the Abbé Peyramale had confidence in this command, and commenced that mighty edifice which is now so near completion.

To the east of the church, and a little below it as one ascends from Lourdes, a residence for the missionaries of the Immaculate Conception has been built. It is of light but neat construction, and overhangs the road which leads to the grotto. The fathers give accommodation and maintenance to a few persons who may wish to make a retreat, as there is not yet space for many. The direction of the pilgrimage and the services at the crypt are confided to

these zealous and pious priests, under the guidance of the excellent Father SEMPÉ, for whose hospitality and kindness I desire here to express my most cordial acknowledgments.

The number of pilgrimages to the grotto of Massabielle has increased yearly; the miracles and graces obtained through the intercession of our Lady of Lourdes have not ceased. They are thus described in a number of the 'Annales de Notre-Dame de Lourdes:'—'The long days of the year are days of long pilgrimages. Then the winding road from the town resembles the course of a river, rolling along its waves of pilgrims. Never is the grotto left for an hour together without a votary; the succession of the faithful makes prayer and thanksgiving, as it were, permanent. The edification among these diversified visitors is reciprocal. The greater part of them are on their knees, their eyes fixed on the statue of the Immaculate; others, who have finished their devotions, are seated by the banks of the Gave, recounting their pious impressions, while they admire the mysterious rock and the lovely landscape. All approach the fountain in their turn, drink its miraculous waters, or bathe in them their suffering limbs. Others, again, are scattered along the greensward, or repose under the flowering shrubs, while they partake, in picnic fashion, of the refreshments which they have brought with them from a distance. Differences of rank and condition disappear in this community of faith and piety. The countenances and attitude of all exhibit the same respect and confidence; all hearts seem inspired with the same sentiment—the Virgin was there! ("la Vierge était là!"). It would seem as if they never could grow weary of praying; and it rarely happens that the summer tourist, be he even sceptical and indifferent, visits the grotto and witnesses this spectacle without carrying away a salutary impression, and perhaps renewing the long-forgotten prayers which he had learned and lisped in innocent childhood.'*

* *Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, p. 8. April 30, 1868.

On most days during the spring, summer, and autumn, the pilgrims may be counted by hundreds. The missionary fathers are constantly occupied in the confessionals; from sunrise until noon Masses are being said, and the daily number of communicants corresponds to that of the pilgrims. Even in the winter, the visits of pilgrims are not entirely given up; many brave the inclemency of the season to solicit a corporal favour or a spiritual grace. The number of the clergy who visit Massabielle deserves observation. They all attach great value to the privilege of celebrating Mass in the crypt, thus testifying their universal belief in the apparitions and their faith in the story told by Bernadette. This conviction and devotion are shared, in a greater degree if possible, by the members of the religious orders. So many as sixty Masses have been said on one day in the crypt and at the grotto.

Among the most remarkable pilgrimages of 1868 were those that came from Bayonne and its diocese. On Sunday, May 10, a special train left the station of that city at 5.30 A.M., having as its freight no less than nine hundred men, pilgrims to our Lady of Lourdes. They paid their homage, heard Mass, and received holy Communion at the 'devout chapel' of Bétharram at nine, and arrived at Massabielle at one in the afternoon. Having performed their devotions at the grotto, there was exposition of the blessed Sacrament, and benediction was given by the Bishop of Tarbes at the altar in front of the grotto. Father Sempé delivered a discourse full of devotion and appropriateness, rendered still more impressive by his thrilling voice, energetic action, and ecstatic countenance.

On May 26, Bayonne again sent forth its pilgrim cargo, which this time consisted entirely of women, with the exception of a few priests, who accompanied them as guides and protectors. There were not less than one thousand and forty women, all of them respectable, and many of them belonging to the highest class of society. I was present at the station at Lourdes, which is about two miles distant from the grotto, when this goodly caravan arrived. It

was interesting to see so many women, coming from afar, immediately arrange themselves into processional order; and, after a railway journey of five hours, proceed directly to the grotto. The sun was intensely hot, and compelled them to carry parasols, which rather disturbed the effect of the *coup d'œil.* These ladies presented a handsome *antependium* for the altar before the grotto, made of blue velvet fringed with silver, on which were embossed in golden thread the cipher of Mary and the Pontifical arms. Mass was celebrated by the Dean of the Cathedral of Bayonne, on the altar before the crypt; the choir was composed of the ladies from the Cathedral of Bayonne, led by a charming and accomplished Spaniard of my acquaintance; a few warm words of greeting were addressed to them by the reverend Superior who had welcomed their brethren and fathers some days before, and the bread of life was distributed to these longing worshippers. Their piety, decorum, and modesty won general admiration. When their devotions were finished, they distributed themselves along the verdant banks of the river, or under the shady trees of the adjoining wood, and refreshed themselves with the viands with which they had come abundantly provided. In the afternoon the streets of Lourdes resounded with their busy voices, and the shops carried on a brisk trade in beads and crucifixes, portraits of Bernadette, and photographs of the grotto and the apparition.

The fountain presents one of the most attractive objects in the vicinity of the grotto. It is within a few paces of the present entrance to the grotto, and pours its clear, cool, tasteless waters through three jets, as I have before described, into a marble basin. In a small building adjoining it forms a well or bath, for immersion or washing. Most of the pilgrims carry away some of these precious waters, for which purpose there is an assortment of bottles kept on sale by the guardian of the place. A striking feature in the neighbourhood of the grotto is a street of tents, where, as at Bétharram, the pilgrim will be furnished with all the accessories and *souvenirs* of devotion, votive

tapers to burn at the shrine, beads blessed by the missioners, medals with the legend of Lourdes, and images of every price and value.

A number of wax candles burn perpetually in the grotto, under the niche where the statue of the Immaculate Conception is placed—the offerings of the pilgrims, placed by them to typify and continue the prayers which they had poured forth at the shrine of Her whose slightest request God loves to grant, and who never can be indifferent to the flame of divine confidence when it illuminates the soul of her client. It is the pious custom for mothers to bring their infants to Massabielle, and there make an offering of their heart and life to the service and protection of Her who is pre-eminently the Mother of innocence and purity.

And BERNADETTE, what has become of her throughout this long history, and during the time that has elapsed since its commencement? During two years immediately following the apparitions she lived with her family, often visited and interrogated by those who frequented the grotto. She was always accessible; no effort was made to conceal her, or to prevent the interrogatories of all who pleased to question her. She never exhibited the slightest appearance of vanity or self-esteem in consequence of the favours that she had received. When she spoke of them it was unaffectedly and simply, and without emotion. It was not in her character to be very expansive, and she had no power of word-painting; her accounts were brief, and almost cold, and many questions were necessary before she would enter with animation upon the description of her visions. Those, however, who heard her narrative from her own mouth could never refuse their testimony to her truthfulness and candour.

'How can you speak so calmly of such matters?' once said a person to her. 'At least no one can say that you have invented them.'* The disinterestedness of her poor

* 'Comment peux-tu parler si tranquillement de telles choses? Du moins on ne pourra pas dire que tu les as inventées.'

parents was equal to their piety and honesty. They invariably refused every present and offer of pecuniary assistance which were made to them from time to time by the charity or generosity of their visitors. Frequently, at the hour when the grotto was most free from visitors, there might be seen a little girl humbly kneeling before the spot where the apparition had manifested itself. It was a child of the poor, meanly clad and distinguished in nothing from others of her class; indeed, unless when personally known to some neighbour, no one imagined that this was Bernadette. She whom the Lord had chosen for such privileges had withdrawn into silence and shade. She went daily to school at the convent, where she was always the most simple and the most anxious to avoid notice. Like Mary on earth, she kept many things in her heart, and seemed to live in secret upon the memory of that incomparable vision.

After a couple of years, she was placed by the bishop in the convent of the Hospice at Lourdes, under the protection of the nuns of that excellent establishment. The work of our Lady of Lourdes possessed essentially the character of publicity. It was originated publicly, before the multitude, and so should it consolidate its establishment under the eyes of the world, and exposed to its most inquisitive examination. And thus, while at the Hospice, Bernadette was still allowed to receive the visits and answer the enquiries of all who sought her. They often came in numbers; peasants, priests, men of the world, poor people, great ladies, soldiers of every grade, would demand audience of Bernadette, and a nun in attendance ushered them in, each one in turn, that they might hear, and, 'hearing, believe.'

She had been anxious for some time to withdraw herself from the fatigue and excitement of so much publicity; and her health, never very robust, had become enfeebled and delicate. Her desire to devote herself to God altogether becoming very fervent, she was sent to Nevers, and there placed in the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity.

On October 30, 1867, she was professed, her age then being about twenty-four. She is always the same quiet simple Bernadette as when first she was made the humble instrument of so much favour to her native town. Her present character has been sketched in the following extract from a letter from a sister of the community at Nevers:—'She is always a truly charming child, pious as an angel, gentle as a lamb, and simple as a dove. May the good God deign to preserve her to us—it does so much good to see her.'*

No future time can efface the memory of the great and holy things with which the name of this illiterate peasant must henceforth be associated. The transformation of that wild rugged grotto to a sacred sanctuary; the erection of a magnificent church upon the summit of an inaccessible rock; the works of God and grace in many souls; the sudden relief and cure of many diseased and dying; the wide-spread renown of a place hitherto unknown; a future full of promise and of faith; all produced by the revelations of a weak, uninstructed child. What power could that child or its wild words have had to do all this? Assuredly, it is the hand of God that has worked these wonders, and Bernadette was his instrument. It is the hand of God that has raised up, as if from chaos, an enduring monument to perpetuate, in this beautiful land, the glory of Mary and the dogma of her Immaculate Conception.

I take shame to myself in saying, that when I went to the south-west of France in the winter of 1867, I was ignorant of the history of our Lady of Lourdes. I cannot therefore be astonished when I occasionally meet excellent Catholics from Great Britain and Ireland whose knowledge of the apparition at Massabielle is no greater than my own had been. I hope that this ignorance on the greatest event of our age, in relation to the glory and honour of

* 'C'est toujours une bien charmante enfant, pieuse comme un ange, douce comme un agneau, simple comme une colombe. Que le bon Dieu daigne nous la conserver! Elle fait tant de bien à voir!'—*Annales de N.-D. de Lourdes*, 1re livraison, p. 15.

the blessed Virgin, may no longer exist in the British Islands; and with this hope and desire, I have felt it a duty as much as a pleasure to place before my English readers, in lengthened detail, this astonishing and consoling recital.

The story of Bernadette in many respects has been more fortunate than that of Maximin and Mélanie at La Salette. So many spectators witnessed her in ecstasy that the occurrences became known and popularly credited almost as soon as they had taken place. The apparition was not confined to once or twice, but was manifested on eighteen different occasions, and upon each of these there were several witnesses present who were awestruck by the transfiguration of her appearance and convinced by the consistency and congruity of her story. She, too, was exposed to the incredulity and menaces of the unbelieving and worldly-wise, and her visions, and the miracles that confirmed them, were subjected to the tests of science and learning. She was, however, more fortunate in encountering an opposition less malignant and persevering than that which has been given to the apparition of La Salette. Both of them, however, are now equally established in the convictions and affections of the great Catholic world, and we may be permitted devoutly to hope that those whose judgment has not yet been persuaded may come and drink of the fountain and eat of the herb, that they also may be healed and enlightened. What Dr. Northcote remarks in the conclusion of his well-reasoned paper on Our Lady of Salette may well be applied to Lourdes:—'Recognise the truth of the miracle, and what an act of faith will you not be making in an age which is especially opposed to divine facts! Try to deny it, and what strange suppositions will you not have to invent in order to support your denial!'

The story of Massabielle singularly confirms all that has been recounted concerning the apparition of our Lady at other sanctuaries of the Pyrenees and in other times, as regards both its accidents and its incidents. What

had been told and believed at Garaison in the sixteenth century is repeated at Lourdes in the nineteenth; and we find the same succession of miraculous cures, spiritual conversions, increasing and continuing pilgrimages, which had distinguished one epoch and place, now recurring with wonderful resemblance at another time and place in the same land. Is it not to show that the hand of God has not been shortened, nor the power and love of his blessed Mother diminished? Is it not to renew and confirm, under the blaze of modern enlightenment, all that which the faith of our ancestors in the 'dark ages' prized and practised?

For myself, I cannot have visited Lourdes, studied the history of the apparition, conversed on the subject with its priests and people, prayed at the grotto, heard Mass and received holy Communion in the crypt, and not have brought away a profound conviction of its truth. I may be allowed to adopt in its regard the language of the Rev. Spencer Northcote, when speaking of La Salette:— 'If it be allowed that the history which we have told is a true history, and that the apparition of our blessed Lady to the children of La Salette' (read Bernadette) 'was the act of Almighty God, every difficulty disappears. The event takes its place amongst a class and order of events where the incongruities we have pointed out are no incongruities at all, but are in the strictest harmony with everything about them. Twelve poor ignorant fishermen confound the wisdom of philosophers, and convert the world. This is the type of God's dealings with mankind under the Christian dispensation, and it is a type with which, if we may be allowed to compare things of such unequal magnitude, the history now before us faithfully corresponds.'*

M. Basclé de Lagrèze, from whom I have so often advantageously quoted in other places, has the following reflections on the apparitions at Massabielle at the con-

* *Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna*, p. 210. By the Rev. J. Spencer Northcote, D.D.

clusion of the last edition (1866) of his valuable work, 'Chronique de la ville et du château de Lourdes':—

'There are persons who say, I will not believe until I shall have seen the miracles with my own eyes. This was the argument of Thomas, and tends to upset all faith in history as well as in religion. It is unnecessary for me to declare here that, thoroughly Catholic myself, I argue as a Catholic who believes in the intercessory power of a Mother with her divine Son, who alone is worthy of the adoration of mankind.

'Can God perform miracles? is a question, says Rousseau, which if seriously treated would be impious if it were not absurd.* And this reflection is true. The God who worked miracles in the olden times has not interdicted to himself the right of working them likewise in our days. I have elsewhere† narrated the origin of the various pilgrimages to the sanctuaries in the Pyrenees consecrated to the Queen of Heaven. I have endeavoured to prove by holy Scripture, by the teachings of the Church, by faith, by reason, that the Lord himself has chosen certain privileged places, that He might therein be worshipped with especial fervour, and wherein He might distribute his graces with greater abundance.

'Why might not Lourdes have obtained this divine privilege and been selected with preference by Mary? The battle-cry of the brave knights of old from the towers of the ancient castle was "*Notre-Dame de Bigorre.*" We have already mentioned that the oldest legend of the country records how the Mother of God was recognised as their sovereign Lady, and how it was to Her, "Dame Marie de Puy," that the Saracen chief surrendered, and that his successors pledged their fealty and homage. Finally, in an old and learned book upon the miracles performed by the blessed Virgin throughout the universe, there is mention of the apparition of our Lady in the

* 'Dieu peut-il faire des miracles? Cette question, sérieusement traitée, dit Rousseau, serait impie si elle n'était absurde.'

† *Les Pèlerinages des Pyrénées.* Telmen, Tarbes.

Pyrenees only upon one occasion. It took place in 1518, at Aspin, a district in the neighbourhood of Lourdes. A man and his wife were in imminent danger of being buried alive by an earth-fall. They considered themselves lost, and addressed a fervent prayer to Notre-Dame, who instantly appeared to them and rescued them, covering them over with her protecting hand as with an ægis, and they were thus enabled through her care to withdraw from the abyss where death seemed inevitably to await them.*

'I have related the facts, and I have even gone so far as to discuss them. I have asked myself, Can it be that these sudden cures, carefully examined and authenticated, have been nothing better than illusions? Is it possible that others, who do not share my religious convictions, have found only error, be it voluntary or involuntary, where I have found the most striking marks of truth and sincerity? If this be the case, the truth can yet be elicited, however momentarily obscured. The witnesses are still on the spot, they are still to be found at Lourdes and in its neighbourhood; let them be examined over again. The physicians are well known; let them again be consulted, and let their reports be met and confuted by adverse arguments. Nothing is easier at the present than to revise the first enquiry by a second, nothing easier than discussion with those whose only desire is that truth should be established, whose only anxiety is that fraud or falsehood should be exposed and rejected. But, so long as these numerous cures cannot be otherwise accounted for, is it enough, in presence of such weighty proofs, merely to treat serious matters with levity? Is it enough to reply to the strongest arguments, to the most scrupulous examination, to the clearest demonstrations, to the best established facts, simply by unreasoned denial, by silly raillery, by incredulous sarcasm, by the disdain of self-sufficient ignorance?

* The title of the book in which the above is told is, *Chronicon SS. Deiparæ Virginis a B. Benedicto Genono . . . miracula per totum orbem patratæ*, in 4to. (1637). About this same period it was that the apparition at Garaison took place.

'At the moment that I am writing these lines, many years have elapsed since the date of the apparition; it is Monday, May 21, 1866. It is in vain that the railway company increases its excursion trains, it is still inadequate to accommodate the immense number of pilgrims. So great is the concourse of those who cannot get places to enable them to carry out their devotion, that the authorities have been frequently in apprehension of some disturbance.

'. . . If I look around me at Lourdes for disbelievers or persecutors, I see nothing but the most complete and touching unanimity. The civil authorities, which at first had been hostile, lest they might perchance become abettors of a ridiculous superstition, at present sympathise completely with the ecclesiastical judgment. At the great *fête* of the inauguration of the statue, the mayor presided, and took his place at the side of the bishop, while the procession was headed by the municipal guard of the city, and by a military detachment from the fortress. . . . Let those, then, who in their pride have said, "Faith is gone" ("La foi s'en va"), come here and see the number of pilgrims who incessantly prostrate themselves before the grotto of the Apparition. Their works of impiety will have been a long time forgotten; while future generations, so long as there shall exist in the world sickness and sorrow, which the world knows not how to cure or console, will, like the present, come to kneel at the feet of the Mother of God, and prostrate themselves before the rocks of Massabielle.'*

Such, then, is the deliberate judgment of an accomplished, sensible, and conscientious man, fully competent from long practice in the courts to sift evidence and weigh testimony.

It has been my privilege to have knelt and prayed upon several occasions at this hallowed spot; those interior influences which I have presumed to unfold have not been unfelt even by me, and it was evident that they were deeply shared by hundreds around me. My first visit was on a

* *Histoire de la ville et du château de Lourdes*, pp. 189–193. Par G.-B. de Lagrèze. Paris, 1866.

peaceful Sabbath afternoon in May—that same Sunday on which I had beheld at Bétharram the pilgrimage from Nay. The crowd and excitement of the morning had passed away; the pilgrims had withdrawn, and few remained at the grotto except some lingering devotees. The evening sun glinted charmingly upon the transparent waters of the Gave, which at that season were at their fullest, and illumined the brilliant verdure of its banks. The almost absolute loneliness of the moment, the exquisite softness of the scenery, and the sacred associations of the place, produced a sentiment so profound, so absorbing, so supernatural, as to baffle any description which my weary pen might essay.

Again I visited the grotto, when fifteen hundred pilgrims from Bigorre knelt before it, while the white-haired Curé of Ossun offered up the divine sacrifice at an altar erected under the azure canopy of heaven, and when more than a thousand worshippers received holy Communion at the feet of Mary Immaculate. There was magnificence and sublimity in this touching spectacle, as it testified to the divinity and the eternity of that Church under whose influence such consolations can be organised. I have already described the pilgrimage from Bayonne, at which I had the gratification to be present. When the train in the evening bore away these pilgrim ladies, it drew up for a minute opposite the grotto, and they saluted fervidly with their white handkerchiefs, while their salutation was courteously returned by Father Sempé and a group of fathers, who stood on the terrace of their hospice to give them a parting greeting and benediction.

Another time, again, and it was the last time, I knelt and prayed at the grotto. There were many pilgrims scattered about, some in silent meditation, some resting upon their staff, some reclining upon the river's bank and looking worshipfully at the niche and the statue. There were ladies of gentle blood and silken attire; there were peasant girls in holiday costume, there were mendicants in tattered garments and with patient countenances. In

the distance stood a young man of fair visage and furrowed brow, with folded arms and curled lip. He gazed about and seemed not to share the sentiment of the place; he scarcely knew its history, for it was not within his range of enquiry; but he stood in respect, if not in reverence. He knelt not, but he drank the water, and others prayed, and in her own good time Mary will work in that heart, I doubt it not, as great a miracle of grace as any that has yet been recorded in her marvellous annals.

How much of our life is seared by separations, if not by cruel losses! Nothing is permanent, nothing is stable here below; the dearest and the tenderest ties are hourly in danger of being snapped asunder; and at the predestined moment no foresight, no effort can delay or prevent the most painful partings. Then the mighty fibres of the heart swell as if they would burst; then it seems as if a portion of our very selves was wrenched from us, as if our soul was torn into shreds, and complete loneliness seems to engulf our existence. Who has not, at one time in his life, felt this great sorrow? Who has not felt this void of heart in final separation from a venerated parent, from a beloved brother, from a devoted friend, from a darling child in its first blush of infancy, from an idolised spouse?—

> There is no flock, however watched and tended,
> But one dead lamb is there!
> There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
> But has one vacant chair!
> * * * *
> There is no death; what seems so is transition:
> This life of mortal breath
> Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
> Whose portal we call death.*

The three hours' agony has seized upon that emaciated but once graceful form; the weeping children surround, in sobbing suspense, that bed of pain; the cold sweat of death has matted that shining hair; those sweet eyes are

* Longfellow.

glazed and dimmed to all things of earth; the last gasp has passed imperceptibly from those once rosy lips; the hand grows icy chill and drops from that which clasped it unto death; the soul is before God, and has rendered an account of many years of mutual confidence and mutual weakness. While, broken and agitated, you rush forth to the balmy air for a little breath, and in blindness and giddiness hurriedly tread the green grass that has so often bent beneath those stiffened and lifeless feet, and the unutterable woe of separation presses down upon you, the great judgment has been pronounced, and that soul has answered for its own sins and perhaps for yours. Who has not tasted this bitter draught of separation, and pronounced the gloomy words, Farewell for ever? But have not these pangs all been shared and hallowed by Mary? 'Stabat Mater dolorosa!' What comparison can our human partings bear with that great separation, when she, the 'Mother of sorrows,' bade farewell to her agonising Son through a veil of blood and tears? Let this recollection console if it cannot reconcile us.

The blessed Virgin confided those secrets to Bernadette which concerned herself alone, and which she commanded her not to reveal to any other person. Holy Scripture tells us that it is good to keep the king's secret: *'Sacramentum regis abscondere bonum est.* Bernadette faithfully kept her secret. She who entrusted her with the secret guarded her discretion, so that she never yielded to the many prying questions which repeatedly sought to entrap her on that point. Like her august patroness, Bernadette preserved her secret in her heart, and might well have said *Secretum meum mihi*; and this discretion furnishes additional proof to many of the truth of the apparition.

And we, too, who have come to Lourdes from afar to honour our divine Mother on the spot where she has the most recently manifested herself, and to pray in all humility, have we no secret words of hers to keep and ponder? Has she whispered nothing to us for our soul's profit or for our personal regulation? Have there been

no heavenly inspirations? no motherly warnings? no salutary impressions? no fervent resolutions? no solemn promises? Have no penitential tears bathed her immaculate feet? Have no fervid resolutions determined that the expiation of the past must be in the mortifications of the future? Alas! who will venture to fathom the soul's secrets in such a place? For me, I dare not.

On the platform of the railway station at Lourdes and on the velvet sward before the grotto at Massabielle, I discussed with the Abbé Fourcade (nephew to the author of the account of the apparition published in 1862, and who has since died) this history and my project. I thank him for the approbation with which he encouraged me to proceed, and for the assistance which he has since given me in correspondence and otherwise. Have I, in return, faithfully performed my presumptuous task?

An English gentleman, a convert from Protestantism, who lost his son at Mentana, a martyr to faith, in the Pope's service, has fixed his residence at Lourdes, that he and his family might pass their days in devotion at the grotto. I could wish that it was vouchsafed to me to pass my remnant of life in such a retreat; but other duties forbid it, and I am compelled to say 'Farewell' to this sacred spot from which I have derived unpurchasable comfort and consolation. Prostrate at thy feet, most blessed Mother, I venerate the spot which they have touched, and I return to the world with the hope that my pilgrimage may not have been all in vain, and that if it is not destined for me to revisit these sacred precincts, I may enjoy their remembrance and bear testimony to the graces there bestowed in the light of thy virginal countenance before the throne of the eternal and omnipotent God!

Let the prayer of our Lady of Lourdes be the conclusion of my inefficient but most devoted work:—

'Thou above all, O powerful Sovereign, canst illuminate with the rays of vivifying light the darkness of death which the spirit of these unhappy days spreads over our souls. Oh! dissipate error, enlighten doubt, strengthen in us the virtues which our Lord, your Son, has bequeathed to us. Be our guide, our protectress, our queen, now and for ever. Amen.'

CANTIQUE À NOTRE-DAME DE LA GROTTE DE LOURDES.

Musique du Père Hermann.

I.

Chantez, enfants de Marie,
Chantez en chœur triomphant,
A Lourdes une petite enfant
A vu cette Mère chérie.
Elle était belle, et ses yeux
Lançaient des regards joyeux.

Refrain.

Ni larmes, ni plainte amère!
Au-dessus du rosier fleuri,
Elle a souri, bonne Mère,
La bonne Mère a souri.

II.

Sa robe était blanche et pure,
Son voile, blanc comme un lis,
Et pour nous cacher dans ses plis
Elle portait une ceinture.
A la place des souliers,
Une rose sur ses pieds;
Mais pas une plainte amère, etc.

III.

Quand la pauvre bergerette
Vit pour la première fois
Cette Mère du Roi des rois,
La frayeur la rendit muette;
Et puis elle s'enhardit,
Et confiante elle se dit:
Loin de moi la crainte amère, etc.

'Vous surtout, ô puissante Souveraine, pouvez jeter les rayons d'une vivifiante lumière dans les ténèbres de mort que l'esprit de ces temps malheureux répand dans nos âmes. Ah! dissipez donc l'erreur, éclairez la doute, raffermissez en nous la vertu que nous à léguée notre Seigneur, votre Fils. Soyez notre guide, notre protectrice, notre Reine, maintenant et toujours. Ainsi soit-il.'

Pater, Ave, Gloria Patri, etc.

HYMN TO OUR LADY OF THE GROTTO OF LOURDES.

Music by Father Hermann.

I.

Children of Mary, chant with grace,
Your hymns in joyous chorus swelling;
In Lourdes a lowly maiden dwelling
Hath seen our cherished Mother's face.
Oh! she was beautiful, and bright
With bliss was her eyes' lovely light.

Chorus.

Nor tear nor grief her brow beguiled:
She rested on a budding rose;
And, like a mother, gently smiled
When a good mother gifts bestows.

II.

Her flowing robe was purest white;
Her veil was like the lily fair:
As if to hide us fondly there,
She wore a golden girdle tight.
In place of shoes upon her feet
A rose exhaled its perfume sweet.

III.

When first the humble shepherdess
Our great King's royal Mother saw,
She could not speak for very awe,
Nor suppliant word to Her address:
But soon more confident became,
And asked about her state and name.

IV.

Marie en touchant la terre
A fait jaillir un ruisseau,
Si clair et si frais, qu'à son eau
Chaque passant se désaltère.
C'est l'image des bienfaits
Qu'elle répand désormais.
Loin de nous la crainte amère, etc.

V.

Là de nouveau le ciel brille,
Pour l'aveugle bien souvent:
Plus d'un boiteux, se relevant,
A pu marcher sans sa béquille.
Que de pauvres affligés
S'en retournent soulagés!
Loin d'une triste crainte amère, etc.

VI.

Surtout, combien sa clémence
Prend en pitié les pécheurs!
Comme elle sait gagner leurs cœurs
Par sa miséricorde immense!
Désormais tout à JÉSUS,
Ils ne l'offenseront plus.
Pour calmer leur plainte amere, etc.

VII.

Mais pourquoi ce doux sourire,
Cette paix, cet air si joyeux,
Et cette vision des cieux?
D'un seul mot je vais vous le dire:
L'Immaculée est son nom!
La devise est le pardon.
Pour nous plus de crainte amère, etc.

IV.

When Mary touched the parched-up earth,
A stream of water clear and fresh,
That might the pilgrim's thirst refresh,
With power miraculous burst forth:
The type of that full stream of grace
Which gladdens souls in that loved place.

V.

For there the blind once more his sight
Regains, and sees the blue skies shine;
And there the lame, by gift divine,
Casts down his crutch and walks upright;
There many a heart in desolation
Has found both hope and consolation.

VI.

And there poor sinners surely find
That clemency they seek with sighs;
For well she loves, with sweet surprise,
To show her mercy to mankind—
That they no longer shall offend
JESUS, their Master, Lord, and Friend.

VII.

But why this radiant smile? this bliss?
This peaceful joy? this light of love?
This vision of bright heaven above?
A word will tell it all: 'tis this—
Mary Immaculate her name!
Her motto pardon doth proclaim!

D. S. L.

ST. SAVIN.

ST. SAVIN.

(ANCHORITE OF THE VAL DE LAVÉDAN.)

'Ut potes, fac quælibet, ego feci quod expedit.'—*Words of St. Savin to the Abbot Forminius.*

'Notre vallée peut à bon droit se glorifier, autant qu'aucune autre, d'avoir été le séjour d'un grand nombre des saints qui l'ont illustrée par l'éclat peu commun de leurs sublimes vertus. Pourquoi ne pas rappeler quelqu'une de ces belles vies, pour encourager et exciter les fidèles à conserver dans ce pays le sentiment de foi chrétienne que nous ont légué nos ancêtres ?'—*Vie de saint Savin*, par l'abbé Abbadie. (Préface.)

THE Catholic tourist who visits the valley of Lavedan, and passes a day at the quaint town of Argèles, will not fail to direct his steps to the ancient church of ST. SAVIN. As the traveller from Lourdes proceeds towards Pierrefitte, his attention is attracted by the imposing pile of ecclesiastical buildings which crowns the summit of a wooded hill to the right; and a pleasant ascent through umbrageous chesnuts and branching oaks brings him, in little more than half an hour, under the walls of this once celebrated and still most interesting structure. The history of St. Savin belongs to another class of devotion than that which has occupied us hitherto. Our interest heretofore has been directed solely to places which have been celebrated as pilgrimages and shrines of our Lady; but dazzled and overpowered by the glories of Lourdes, upon which we have been gazing so long, I will ask my readers to retire with me for a little while into the desert, and return to the ancient days in which they and I so much delight. We are now about to contemplate the life of a great servant of God, whose memory subsists after ten

centuries as vigorous and fresh in the veneration of the people as though it was the recollection only of yesterday. Neither, in regarding him, shall we ever lose sight of the other great object of our pilgrimages, as the chapel of Our Lady of Mercy stands in prominent eminence upon that isolated hill, in front of, and at a short distance from, the tomb of the saint. St. Savin is likewise a 'Sanctuary of the Pyrenees,' and as such I feel that I do not owe any apology to my readers for including it in a work, the leading object of which is, while celebrating the honour of our Lady, to record the piety of the simple people of these valleys, illustrated in their holy places and holy men.

Old St. Savin overlooks that enchanting landscape, to describe which I already have declared my inability. The late curé, the Abbé Joseph Abbadie, in his Life of St. Savin, 'Anachorète du Lavédan,' writes of it:—'The valley of Lavedan is beyond contradiction the loveliest, richest, and most picturesque of the Pyrenees. To contemplate its beauties undisturbed, an agreeable *Belvedere*, by which one might embrace and enjoy the enchanting variety of the panoráma at a single glance, is essential; and this is afforded by St. Savin and the neighbouring Piétat. At all periods this magnificent point of view has formed an attraction to those strangers who seek in our mineral waters restoration of health or relief from the fatigues of life; and being the most interesting promenade in this neighbourhood, few neglect to make the excursion. Thus one often hears repeated, at the *tables-d'hôte*, the enquiry, "Have you yet been to St. Savin? Oh! we must visit St. Savin, it is such a delicious excursion" ("Avez-vous été à St.-Savin? Il faut aller à St.-Savin; c'est une promenade délicieuse"). No doubt many go through curiosity to admire the glorious spectacle which that view offers, but many more go through devotion, to venerate the relics and implore the intercession of that holy anchorite, who, while he has left his body to their keeping, has given his name to the church and the parish. Others there are

who, less enthusiastic in their admiration of scenery, are nevertheless brought there by their taste for architecture and their love of antiquity, and these can amply indulge their passion in studying the details of that Romanesque basilica, which now ranks among the most interesting ecclesiastical monuments of France.'*

There is a moral aspect in the history of the valley of Lavedan which will cause no less admiration to my Catholic readers than any description of its scenic loveliness, and that is the firmness with which its inhabitants resisted the persecutions of Jeanne d'Albrecht during her anti-Catholic crusade. The historian tells us that 'her army never entered the heart of the valley of Lavedan, whether prevented by the difficulties of the road or by the determined resistance of the inhabitants, who were equally disposed to repel the enemy by force and to defend religion, which they had outraged by so many profanations.'†

The first appearance of St. Savin is eminently striking: the massive walls, the large rude stones with which it is built, its beautiful portal, its exquisite side-door, its strange extinguisher-shaped spire, the large space which it covers, as if it was the sole occupant of that noiseless deserted town, impress one with mingled sentiments of admiration and regret. The present church dates from the twelfth century, and has been frequently described by archæologists. The most recent is M. de Lagrèze, in his erudite work 'Les Monographies de St.-Savin.' There is only one great entrance to the church: it is one of the most interesting that I have seen. It is a fine Romanesque arch, semicircular; the archivolt, which is rather deep, being

* *Détails archéologiques et historiques de l'église et monastère de St.-Savin*, par Joseph Abbadie, p. 7.

† '. . . elle ne s'engagea point non plus dans l'intérieur des vallées de Lavédan, soit par la difficulté du chemin, soit par la crainte d'éprouver une trop forte résistance de la part des habitants, aussi disposés à repousser les forces ennemies par les armes, qu'à défendre la religion outragée par tant de profanations.'—Poëydavant, *Hist. des Troubles survenus en Béarn*, tom. i. liv. 6me, p. 411.

ornamented with mouldings, alternately round and hollow, supported by shafts in the jamb. The work is most elaborate and perfect. One descends into the church by a flight of rough stone steps, upon the floor, which is boarded like the churches in Spain. On the right side of the nave there is a large impressive figure of Christ on the cross, the body being attached by three nails, according to an ancient tradition. It is said to be of great antiquity, and is much valued by the people. The organ should not be left unnoticed: its style is unique; it belongs to the Renaissance, and is remarkable for three masks or mascarons placed in the base, which roll their eyes and put forth their tongues whenever the pedals are in action—much, I should deem, to the distraction of the faithful, especially of the younger portion. A thunderbolt fell some years ago close to the organ-loft, rendering it necessary to place a prop at the spot near which it penetrated.

In the choir of the church, formerly abbatial, there is a series of paintings on wood, in compartments, which set forth the most remarkable events of the life and death of St. Savin. These paintings are ascribed to the fifteenth century, and exhibit no small artistic merit. It would be desirable that some competent hand were employed to restore them, as the colouring begins to fade, and the inscriptions to become indistinct. The inscription or legend beneath each compartment is in Béarnais.

I called upon the curé, the Abbé Fentan, who occupied a better house than generally falls to the lot of his brother priests in the Pyrenees. There stood at his door a large tree, which I was told had been planted there by the parishioners, in testimony of their respect and welcome, on his appointment to the parish. He received me most kindly, conducted me to the church, knelt and prayed with me at the tomb of St. Savin, presented to me his relics to venerate, and gave me a full account of the life of the saint and the history of the church. It is one that is little known in England, and I shall be sufficiently re-

warded if my humble labours help to extend acquaintance with it, or to bring a single pilgrim to this shrine.

St. Savin was born at Barcelona, some time in the eighth century. Shortly after his birth his mother was left a widow, and she devoted herself with assiduity to his education. She directed her labour to form his young mind for God rather than for the world, by imparting early principles of piety and religious knowledge; his precocious intelligence admirably responded to her care, and he soon exhibited the happy results of her solicitude in his spirit of charity towards the poor and the practice of good works. 'Happy those children,' exclaims his biographer, 'who from their infancy have received a Christian education, under the eyes of a pious parent; still more happy are those parents who, like the mother of St. Savin, make it their pleasure as well as their duty to bring up the children with whom Providence has entrusted them in his holy fear and love, and who form them daily, by their own example, to the exact fulfilment of his commandments.' Alas! how many are lost through the neglect or indifference of their parents in early years; and how awful is the accountability of those parents who, by their negligence, slothfulness, or over-indulgence, consign their offspring to perdition! But such was not the case with Savin.

Being born in a high position, it was considered desirable to finish his education by residence in foreign countries; and his mother, with difficulty, was induced to consent that he should pay a visit to the court of his uncle, Hentilius, Count of Poitiers, which was one of the most brilliant then in France. Savin left his beloved mother with a heavy heart; he did not desire the polish of the court, and he feared its contagion. His secret intention was to seek alone that knowledge which could profit his soul; and, accordingly, on his journey he avoided the highways of great cities, and sought his lodging generally in the Benedictine monasteries. In due time he arrived at Poitiers; where he was cordially received by his uncle, who

caressed him as his relative, and treated him with all the dignity due to a young prince. The language of the old chronicle is very picturesque:—'Il arriva à Poitiers, où il fut reçu comme un ange, caressé comme un parent, et traité comme un jeune prince.' As a mark of his confidence, Hentilius placed him in charge of the education of his son and heir. This employment, which was one of distinction, had no influence upon the heart of Savin; and he continued to divide his time between prayer, the duties of his situation, and the care of the poor. He lived with the greatest simplicity, fasted rigidly, dressed modestly, and kept a most frugal table. He resisted all the temptations to pleasure which surrounded him in that luxurious court, and laboured to inspire the mind of his pupil with the sentiments of piety and charity by which he himself was animated.* There is a pleasing sketch of this event of his life in one of the compartments of the pictures which I have mentioned, with the legend, *Cum S. Sevi instruix lo Filh deu Comte en Sanctitat.*

The result of this teaching in the heart of the young count was an earnest desire to unite himself to his cousin, and with him devote his life to the service of God in a monastery. With this intention, he left his father's house secretly, and retired to the monastery of Ligugé, dedicated to St. Martin, under the rule of St. Benedict, near Poitiers. Nothing could exceed the anguish of the countess, his mother, upon learning this intelligence. She sought Savin at once, threw herself at his feet, and in her desolation implored him to bring back to her that idolised son whom she had confided to his care. She cried out, 'Restore to me my child; it is you who have taken him away. You have a mother yourself; think what would be her grief if you were to abandon her for ever.'† She called upon Savin instantly to depart and compel his cousin

* 'Optimus institutor . . . a comite habitus quæstibus opulentus, præter simplicem vestitum, vel unius equi vehiculum, quidquid superveniebat liberali gratiâ pauperibus erogabat.'—*Off. S. Savini.*

† 'Tunc materfamilias sanctum Savinum precatur, ut filium suum de *Locotiacum* sancti Martini monasterii revocaret, concito articulo.'—*Id.*

to leave the monastery, and to return to the parental roof. But he replied that he too had left a mother by whom he was adored, that he too had renounced the most brilliant prospects, that he too had resolved to abandon the world, and that he never could advise another to hesitate at a sacrifice which he himself was about to make; that his divine Master had said, 'He who loveth father or mother better than me is unworthy of me.' He hastened to the monastery; but, so far from supporting the wishes of the countess, he urged his cousin to remain faithful to his call, and on that same day was clothed himself with the habit of St. Benedict. He, with his cousin, entered the novitiate, and, during three years, these two young friends, to whom the world offered so much of its pleasures and honours, voluntarily subjected themselves, for the love of Jesus Christ, to all the austerities of the cloister, its obedience, its silence, and its poverty. The ceremony of their 'clothing' is represented in one of the pictures: *Cum S. Sevi et lo Filh deu Comte Receben lors habits a Poeytiés.*

The ascetic spirit of Savin was not formed to be content with the simple monastic rule; it aspired to higher things and sighed for greater perfection in the eremitical life. He consulted the abbot, but he prudently refrained from advising him; as, if he disapproved, he feared he might oppose the designs of Providence, and if he approved, he knew that he would deprive the community of an exemplary inmate. Savin, however, persevered, and soon overcame all doubting. He bade adieu to his cousin and the monastery, and, accompanied by a single companion, traversed France with the staff and garb of a pilgrim, living by the alms which they begged on the way, until divine inspiration directed him to the valley of which he was ordained to be the patron and benefactor.

Having reached Tarbes, he presented himself to the bishop, who then occupied the see of St. Justin and St. Faustus, and having informed him of his project, obtained his approbation and benediction. About thirty-six kilo-

mètres from Tarbes, on the side of a mountain overlooking the valley of Lavedan, there existed a Benedictine monastery, which had been built upon the ruins of an ancient castle, believed to have belonged to the Gallo-Roman epoch, as its name, *Palatium Æmilianum*, would indicate. This name it retained until the death of St. Savin. It is pretended by some writers that this monastery had been founded by Charlemagne, but it is more probable, according to others, that it had been restored by that prince. Savin addressed himself to the abbot of this monastery, whose name was Forminius. His reception by him forms the subject of one of the pictures: *Cum S. Sevi Fo Recebut per lo Abbat Formings et los Religios.* The good abbot received him hospitably, and, learning from him his design, was not slow to recognise in it the evident marks of a true vocation from God. He desired much to retain the holy hermit in the vicinity of his monastery, and with this object conducted him to a solitary spot in the mountains called Pouey-Aspé (*Podium Asperum*), about four kilomètres distant, wild, uncultivated, abrupt, with the mountain of Cabaléros at its back. However beautiful was the view that met the eye from this spot, it was an interest of a different order that determined Savin to adopt it for his abode. From this place he could see, between the rocks in a solitary valley near Villelongue, the hermitage where a countryman of his, St. Orens, had lived in solitude for so many years, until called to the see of Auch, as I have narrated in a former page, and this association had a charm for the soul of Savin, giving him as it were a companion from his native land to encourage and support him in the desert.

Under the shadows of these lofty mountains covered with perpetual snow, and enveloped in frequent fogs, with a climate as cold as if it belonged to the frozen North, Savin found a retreat suited to his mortified spirit—a secret solitude, in which he might attain the most sublime meditations of the contemplative life. He built with his own hands a small hut, which was scarcely adequate

to shelter him from the weather or protect him from the wild beasts with which the woods then abounded. It took but little time to construct this cabin, which was eight feet long and five feet broad, the walls of dry stone and thatched with rushes. The great difficulty of its construction was to bring up the scanty materials, as the path was almost impassable. The Abbot Forminius frequently visited Savin in his solitude; seeking instruction from his conversation and edification from his example. During one of these visits, a short time after he had completed his hermitage, he was surprised to learn from Savin that he considered his habitation too comfortable, and had determined to arrange for himself a new style of abode. He dug a pit in the earth seven feet long and five feet deep, and here he, as it were, buried himself alive—taking for his bed a grave. The water exuded from all sides of this tomb during the rains, which fell constantly, as we are informed in his office.*

The abbot remonstrated with him, and endeavoured to dissuade him from persevering in what he considered to be an exaggerated penance. 'I alone know myself,' replied the hermit; 'I alone can measure the expiation due for my sins. Every person should do what he can; I have done that which I ought: *ut potes, fac quælibet, ego feci quod expedit.*' This act of the saint suffices to make us comprehend the spirit of the life to which he had devoted himself. What a contrast to the ease and luxury which had surrounded him in his ancestral palace! What a sentiment of penitential atonement in those heroic souls of the ancient days, which enabled them thus to conquer the cravings of the body, and for the love of Christ, and in union with his sufferings, endure the most cruel privations! In this place, like Elias on Mount Carmel, our saint attained the most perfect spirit of prayer and mortification. Clad in a single garment, which, as if by a

* 'Grabatus in quo jacebat erat demissa fovea, ut non putares lectulum sed sepulchrum; descendente impetu pluviali implebatur aquis fossa, et redundabat injuria.'—*Off. S. Savini.*

miracle, lasted him for thirteen years, he used to walk barefooted over the sharp rocks, even during the severest seasons, when they were covered with frost and ice. When the winter snow fell thick upon his hut, and the night wind shook its slender foundations, when through the darkness no sound disturbed the silence save the roaring of the wild animals, his soul, impervious to all human fear, had no thought but for heaven; absorbed in contemplation and a burning desire for union with the object of his love, he heeded not the tempest that raged around nor the beasts that howled about him.* And yet it is asserted that he suffered many temptations even during this life of mortification. Indeed, the history of the saints constantly reveals to us how much more they suffer from the temptations of the Evil One than do those worldlings whom he regards as his own; but divine grace supported Savin, as it ever does the true servant, and enabled him to overcome the distractions and delusions which beset him.

Savin used to suffer much during the summer from thirst, the little spring which supplied him being dried up by the excessive heats. On one of these occasions, in seeking to allay his thirst at a neighbouring well, he had to cross the meadow of a person named Chromasse, belonging to the village of Uz. This man, irritated at seeing a beggar, as he thought, trespass upon his land, sent his servants to drive him away. They executed this order with much brutality; and one of them, abusing the holy hermit, struck him and injured him severely. Savin bore this with his habitual patience; but his divine Master, taking vengeance into his own hands, showed that his servant could not be outraged with impunity. The man who had assaulted him became possessed by the devil on the spot, and his master at the same time was struck

* 'Sanctus Savinus per annos ferè tredecim cella prædicta, sine pullo, sine omni peculio, die nóctuque in Dei laudibus permansit. Admiranda viri constantia, una contentus tunica, vili gunula superjecta, sine calceamento, nuda planta, cum saxa frigus scinderet, nuda viri caro perduraret; et postponeret algorem de corpore, manens spiritus in fervore.'—*Off. S. Savini.*

blind. But Savin, in his charity, fell upon his knees and implored the Lord to relieve the afflicted transgressors, and thus enable him to repay evil with good. Thereupon the servant was delivered from the demon, but his master, Chromasse, was condemned to remain blind for many years, until, touching the saint's body after his death, he miraculously recovered his sight. This incident is represented by one of the pictures: *Cum S. Sevi, Feyta Sa Cella, Cromassio lo Menassa.* Having thus failed in his effort to slake his thirst, he sought relief from God, and, like Moses of old, striking the rock with his staff, there issued forth an abundant stream, which continues to flow to this day.

As Savin progressed in holiness, the fame of his sanctity extended throughout the country. Whenever any misfortune befell the shepherds on the mountains, they resorted to him, certain that his prayers would protect or relieve them. His heart and his hut were always open; he knew that the highest exercise of piety consists in works of charity towards our fellow-men. If he had not wealth to share with them, he had words that consoled, prayers that healed, counsels that supported and directed. Are not these of priceless value to souls that are sick and hearts that suffer?

A priest of the valley was one day crossing the bridge of the Gave, near Pierrefitte, when suddenly he and his horse fell into the torrent. At the time the waters were swollen by the melting snow, and the poor priest felt himself carried along on the surging flood to inevitable destruction. In this position he lifted his soul to God, and his thoughts to the solitary of Pouey-Aspé. Savin happened to see the accident from a distance, and, witnessing the struggle with death, he prayed in faith and tears for the deliverance of the drowning man, who at the same instant unexpectedly found himself on the bank, high and dry, with his horse at his side. The priest, recognising in his miraculous rescue the interposition of Savin, hastened to Pouey-Aspé to thank him for his

preservation. This incident is portrayed in the series of pictures: *Cum Lo Capera Tomba en la Ribera Se Reclama S. Sevi.*

There is a tradition in the valley, of a woman who, for a long time had been possessed by the devil, but was delivered from the foul spirit by the hermit's exorcisms. This event is depicted in the pictorial sketches of his life. It is recorded that, one evening, being in his cell and wanting a light, he put the candle to his heart, which emitted a flame that communicated itself to the taper, and continued to burn vividly throughout the night.* The Benedictine fathers attribute his existence, during thirteen years, exposed to continued fogs and snows, or burning heat, with little raiment to protect and little food to nourish him, to supernatural agency.

At last Savin drew near to the close of his earthly pilgrimage. Like so many holy men of all times, he had a presentiment of his approaching death, and accordingly sent for the abbot Forminius, to bid him a last farewell. The abbot answered that he could not come until the next day, as he was detained by business of the monastery; thereupon Savin sent a second messenger to him to say that 'to-morrow it would be too late, for a greater occupation would engross him.'† When this intelligence became known, a number of the monks and priests of the neighbouring parishes hurried up to attend his death-bed. Even when in this condition, he still occupied himself with the interests of others, and nominated as his successor in the hermitage one whose prayers and macerations should have for their object, like his own, the edification and salvation of the people of the valley of Lavedan and its monasteries. 'Happy times,' exclaims M. Abbadie,

* 'Cum ex more solito nocte vigilaret divina gratia inebriatus, cum lumen non posset alicubi invenire de lumine pectoris lucem oculis ministravit . . . Modicus cereus noctis ordinem usque ad diem se ardente transegit.'—*Off. S. Savini.*

† 'Ante sui beati obitus diem petiit Abbatem Forminium ut ei occurrere mereretur, qui dixit non posse tunc id fieri, quibusdam negotiis monasterii impeditus. Beatus Savinus tunc respondit, Si vult, hodie veniat, nam cras major eum occupatio circumdabit.'—*Id.*

'when a saint on his death-bed bequeaths, as a coveted inheritance, a poor cell, some instruments of torture, a discipline, and the example of an entire life of mortification and self-denial.'

When the supreme moment had arrived—that moment full of ineffable joy for the elect, full of terrible mystery for those who have loved the world more than God—blessed Savin, fortified by the last Sacraments, his hands extended towards heaven, his brow beaming with ecstasy, his lips murmuring the prayer for the dying, closed his career on earth, and commenced that which knows no end nor change. His friend, Abbot Forminius, was absent, but the tolling of the death-knell soon announced to him and the valley that their benefactor, their counsellor, their holy hermit no longer was among them. Orders were issued for the removal of his body from the hermitage to the monastery, whither it was translated with great pomp and much mourning, and deposited in a tomb in the abbatial church, which is built on the site of the Emilian palace. Subsequently it was removed to the apse of the church, and there it remains at the present day. A versicle in his office testifies the sentiments of the people on this occasion:—

Gaude, mater ecclesiæ,
Et tota lavetania,
Nam hodie ad cœlestia
Savinus transit gloria.

His old persecutor, Chromasse, joined the funeral procession, and, recognising the enormity of the offence which he had committed towards him, desired to be conducted to the place near which the body of the saint should pass as it traversed the village of Uz. He approached the bier with trembling, placed his hand upon the body, and prayed fervently that his former insolence might be forgiven; whereon his sight was instantly restored, to the astonishment and edification of the entire *cortége.*

The legend of the Auscitain Breviary has been preserved entire in the *propre* of Tarbes, annexed to the Roman

Breviary, with the office of the saint, which was composed by the monks of his monastery. It is from this office that I have quoted; M. de Lagrèze has had it printed anew at the end of his '*Monographie de St.-Savin de Lavédan.*' After meditating on his life, it was with no lukewarm veneration that I knelt at the tomb of the holy hermit, and looked upon those precious relics which have survived so many catastrophes, and, at the end of a thousand years, are still presented to the homage of the faithful. His comb and girdle are preserved in separate *châsses* in the sacristy, where some of his bones are kept in a silver shrine, and may be discerned clearly through the crystal. They are exposed, on certain festivals, to public view, and are carried processionally through the village on the Sunday within the octave of his feast, which is celebrated on October 11. The anniversary of the translation of his remains is observed on August 5.

The tomb was used for many years as the high altar of the church, as was the custom with tombs of the saints in the primitive ages of Christianity. The stone (schistous) which covers it is supported at the four corners by columns, having their capitals carved with flowers. The rude workmanship of this tomb induces archæologists to ascribe it to the ninth century—the epoch of the death of St. Savin. A handsome pyramidal canopy in wood, gilt and elaborately carved, has been placed over the tomb as a mark of respect. This is supposed to belong to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and figures in the picture which represents Savin's funeral. It is admired for the gracefulness and finish of its details. In a niche of this canopy may be seen a statuette of the blessed Virgin, clothed in a long garment, and wearing a mantle like a cope. It is believed to have been brought from Palestine and presented to the monastery by some noble cavalier of the valley who had fought in the crusades. It is said that this tomb was opened about two hundred years ago, that a portion of the relics of the saint were taken out, that the remainder were placed in two round earthen vases and

reconsigned to the tomb. In order to ascertain this fact, the Bishop of Tarbes, Monseigneur B.-S. Laurence, caused the tomb to be again opened on May 12, 1850. It was found to be in the condition described in 1634; containing the two vases, in which were the bones, and near them three slates, on which the following inscription was legible:—'Slate No. 1. The year 1656 the altar was moved back, in which were found the present relics, the 26th September, 1656. Slate No. 2. These are the ashes of the blessed St. Savin, whose bones are in the sacristy, and his bowels in the sepulchre. Slate No. 3. The — September, 1656, the relics have been replaced.'* The bishop has published a detailed account of the condition in which the tomb was found, and of the examination made in presence of a large number of people, lay as well as clerical, which was signed by himself, his vicar-general, twenty priests, the physician of the district, the mayor, the sub-prefect, and several other notabilities.

Various miracles performed at the tomb of St. Savin immediately after his death soon rendered it an object of pilgrimage. The foundation charter in 945 calls St. Savin the 'worthy successor of the Apostles—a man of saintly life, of admirable knowledge, and gifted with the power of miracles.' During many centuries popular homage was rendered to his relics, and pilgrims flocked to his shrine for the cure of their corporal or spiritual ailments. The Knights of Lavedan, combating in the Holy Land, were wont to address their vows to the patron of their native hills; but those 'ages of faith' have passed away, and with them has diminished the veneration of St. Savin. Miracles are no longer worked at his tomb; but it still continues to be honoured in the recollections of the past and in the authentic possession of his beatified remains.

According to ancient documents, the Palatium Æmilia-

* 'Ardoise No. 1.—L'an 1656 l'autel fut reculé, dans lequel furent trouvées les présentes reliques, le 26 septembre 1656. Ardoise No. 2.—Ce sont les cendres du bienheureux saint Savin; les ossemens duquel sont en la sacristie et ses boy. dans le sépulchre. Ardoise No. 3.—Le — septembre 1656 les reliques ont été mises.'

num had occupied the site upon which the abbey and church were built. This Emilian palace was erected by a chieftain of the Goths, who had taken refuge from the Saracens in the Pyrenees. They sacked and destroyed it in the year 717. The monks, driven from their cloisters, as has been their fate in every age, emigrated with the conquered people; and wherever their leader was able to halt and establish himself, there also gathered a few monks under his protection, and a monastery rapidly grew up and flourished. It is probable that the foundation of the first monastery on the ruins of the old palace was due to some such circumstance. Tradition affirms that the famous Roland visited it shortly previous to the battle of Roncesvalles; and so pleased was the Paladin with the reception given to him, that he delivered the country from the oppression of the giants Alabastre and Passamonte.

The monastery of St. Savin followed the rule of St. Benedict, was affiliated to the congregation of St. Maur, and was the chief house in the province of Toulouse. Previous to the death of St. Savin it was known by the name of Palatium Æmilianum; it was burned by the Normans in 843, when they invaded Bigorre. The monks were again dispersed, and nearly a century elapsed before it rose from its ruins, when it was rebuilt and restored by Raymond Count of Bigorre, who conferred upon it the name of St. Savin. He enriched it with many gifts of lands and money; among other donations was that of the valley of Cauterets, which he assigned to the abbey upon condition of building a church in honour of St. Martin, and supplying suitable accommodation for all visitors coming to drink the waters. Several villages grew up around the abbey; many a powerful seigneur bestowed upon it large offerings 'pour la rédemption de son âme.' It administered relief to the poor, and was a refuge to the weak against the tyrannies and exactions of the strong. The 'pascal' or parish of St. Savin comprised eight villages, in the churches of which the priests were permitted to say one Mass on Sundays and holidays for the benefit

of the shepherds and labourers; but they all were obliged to be present at the High Mass, and assist at the ecclesiastical functions at the abbey. The inhabitants not alone of these villages, but of sixty others in the valleys of Argèles and Azun, were under obligation to repair to St. Savin for baptism and for burial. We have already seen how the valley of Azun resisted this obligation in regard to their dead, and how they failed in their resistance.

The effects of a strange superstitious impression at one time threatened the valley with serious inconvenience. The inhabitants of the Val d'Aspe, instigated by a sudden thirst for plunder, unexpectedly swooped down, like a flight of eagles from their eyrie, upon Lavedan. Although taken unawares, the peaceful shepherds of Lavedan rose up to resist this sudden invasion. A conflict commenced, weapons were crossed, and the men of Aspe rushed with fury to the charge, when suddenly they halted, terrified and trembling; their strength failed, their arms fell from their hands, and, unable either to advance or retreat, they stood motionless and petrified. Those who had come to attack were now unable to defend themselves—they could not even fly, but submitted to be massacred, as if doomed by an inevitable fate—while expiring beneath the sword, they could only shout with laughter. Such a strange issue to their expedition could not be accounted for otherwise than by some supernatural intervention. A priest of St. Savin, they said, perched upon an alder tree, held a book in his hand instead of a sword, and, in place of praying to God, invoked the devil. These incantations, they averred, paralysed the energies of the Aspois; they succumbed under the homicidal charm, and, overcome by the influence of sorcery, they submitted to an inevitable death, and not one escaped the slaughter.

The Val d'Aspe appealed to the Pope to obtain satisfaction for this bloody incantation, as the people of Lavedan had refused any reparation; and formal excommunication was pronounced against them. Scarcely had the

interdict been fulminated than its dire consequences made themselves felt throughout the country. The clouds ceased to rain, the earth refused to produce, the seed refused to fructify; grass, plants, trees languished and lost their verdure; flowers and plants decayed; sheep, cows, mares no longer brought forth young, and womankind even was blighted with sterility. It was not until after seven years of terrible punishment that the people of Lavedan showed signs of repentance, when they sent a deputation to Rome to implore to be released from the interdict. Their petition was granted and harmony was restored between the valleys, upon condition that the inhabitants of Lavedan should send ten of their worthiest citizens on a pilgrimage to St. Iago di Compostella, and have celebrated in that church 118 Masses, and pay an annual tribute to the Procureur of the Val d'Aspe, on St. Michael's Day, in the Cathedral of St. Savin. The historian observes that there never has been an event so apparently incredible supported by such authentic documents. There used to be shown until recent times a large pit in the mountains of the Lis, not far from Cauterets, where it is said the Aspois were buried; and the timid shepherd was loath to pass near it after nightfall, as the spectres of the bewitched slain were believed to haunt the spot.

The Abbot of St. Savin had a seat in the State Assembly, and the villages under his jurisdiction were regarded as a republic. Every inhabitant who possessed the right of citizenship ('ayant droit de cité') was entitled to vote at the assemblies of the Vesiau, or corporation. Even the women possessed this prerogative—an example from the 'monkish times' which should not be thrown away upon Mr. Mill and his followers. The communal and representative law of St. Savin is full of interest; but it would exceed the scope and object of my sketch to enter into any detail on this subject, although so inviting.

Among the most valuable possessions that belonged to the monastery of St. Savin were the town and valley of

Cauterets, as has been already mentioned. The celebrity of these famous waters is of very ancient date. Cæsar is said to have visited and used them, and there are many vestiges of Roman occupation; but we are concerned with them at present only in their connection with St. Savin. The abbot made very strict regulations for their good order and well-being. Any annoyance to, or imposition upon, visitors was severely punished, and a vigilant police was commissioned to protect them. An idea of the system may be formed from the following petition, addressed to Michael, Abbot of St. Savin, on the occasion of some irregularities which had disturbed Cauterets:—'From time immêmorial, strangers and inhabitants of our own country who have come to the baths of Cauterets for the benefit of their health have lived here peacefully without annoyance or scandal, so that people from all countries arrive here daily. It is right that these advantages should be secured. Nevertheless, for some time back, persons of loose and lawless character come daily amongst us, using much insolence, and causing such disturbance as not only to intimidate the inhabitants but to disgust the visitors, who come among us for the recovery of their health; we therefore pray,' &c.

The fishery of the Lake de Gaube ('l'étang appelé de Gaube') was another valuable property, which they were accustomed to let upon lease for three years for a small sum of money and half a quintal of trout annually. In modern times the fishery of the Lac de Gaube does not seem to be much prized; but it is a most romantic, exhilarating spot, where all valetudinarians or tourists delight to linger away the sultry summer noon. My recollections would tempt me to loiter upon the glorious mountain side which leads to the lake, the charming Cascade de Cérisy, and the wonderful waterfall of Le Pont d'Espagne which tumbles from an altitude of 1,530 mètres, or 5,130 feet, into a narrow seething gulf, guarded by a forest of dismal pine-trees. Above this, too, is the road to the baths of Pantecosa, across the Spanish frontier,

which is much frequented by droves of fierce-looking muleteers from Aragon or Catalonia.

Modern Cauterets is quite a bustling town, at least during the season: clean streets, with well-furnished gaudy shops and first-class hotels. As the houses generally are high and the streets narrow, there is a more sombre character about it than about any other of the Pyrenean 'baths.' The grim peaks close in upon it very picturesquely, merely leaving space for the pleasant valley over which the town is spread. The promenade *du Mamelon Vert* is an agreeable lounge; it overtops the town, and in the evening hour, when darkness has set in and the town beneath shows all its lights from all its windows, the effect is singularly picturesque and scenic.

Marguerite of Valois loved to visit Cauterets, and is said to have composed her 'Heptaméron' while there. On one occasion she writes that 'the rains were so marvellous and great that it seemed as if God had forgotten the promise He had made to Noah not to destroy the world again by water.' In consequence of those rains she found much difficulty in pursuing her journey to Tarbes on her return from the baths, as all the roads were overflowed and the bridges carried away by the floods. She describes her adventure and the incident of taking refuge at St. Savin. She tells us that, having been on horseback all day, she and her suite perceived, towards evening, a spire, to which they directed themselves as well as they were able, and arriving with much trouble and difficulty they were cordially received by the abbot and monks. The abbey was called St. Savin. The abbot, who was of a very good family, lodged them with great distinction, and, while showing them to their apartments, inquired respecting their adventures. When he had heard their story he told them that they were not altogether alone in misadventure, for that in another room were two young ladies who had narrowly escaped from a great danger. The poor creatures, at half a mile beyond Peyrehite (Pierrefitte), had met a bear coming down the

mountain, from which they fled at such a pace that, on arriving at the abbey, their horses fell dead under them.' The princess tells us that, when she was about to leave St. Savin, the abbot furnished her and her suite with some of the best horses in Lavedan, good Bearn cloaks, abundance of provisions, and stout guides to conduct them in safety through the mountains, which they traversed more on foot than on horseback, until after much sweat and fatigue they arrived at Our Lady of Sarrance.* How pleasant it is to read these quaint old chronicles, and how vividly they delineate in the language of the time the manners and thoughts of the period!

The latter years of the monastery of St. Savin do not offer anything very interesting as regards either religion or history. Numerous documents concerning this period are preserved in the archives at Pau, but they do not possess any great value. The abbots appear to have occupied themselves with the desire of increasing their resources rather than with the anxiety of extending the tradition of saintliness and austerity which had distinguished their predecessors. In consequence, the inhabitants of the valley were in continual opposition to their authority, so that their power and influence gradually diminished.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century, when the monastic reputation of St. Savin was upon the decline, the Sieur Bertin visited the abbey. He was deeply imbued

* '"Viendrent," dit-elle, "des pluies si merveilleuses et si grandes, qu'il sembloit que Dieu eût oublié la promesse qu'il avoit faite à Noé de ne plus détruire le monde par eau. . . . Après avoir chevauché tout le jour, sa suite et elle advisèrent sur le soir un clocher où, le mieux qu'il leur fut possible (non sans travail et sans peine) arrivèrent, et furent de l'abbé et des moines humainement reçus. L'abbaye se nomme St. Savin; l'abbé, qui étoit de fort bonne maison, les logea honorablement, et, en les menant à leur logis, leur demanda leur fortune. Et après qu'il eut entendu la vérité des faits, leur dit qu'ils n'étoient pas tout seuls, car il y avoit en une autre chambre deux damoyselles qui avoient échappé grand danger; car, les pauvres dames, à demi-lieue deçus de Peyrehite, avoient trouvé un ours descendant de la montagne, devant lequel avoient pris la course en si grande haste que leurs chevaux à l'entrée du logis tombèrent morts sous elles. . . . . L'abbé," dit-elle encore, "leur fournit des meilleurs chevaux qui fussent en Lavédan, de bonnes capes de Béarn, de force vivres et de gentils compagnons pour les mener sûrement par les montagnes, lesquelles passées plus à pied que à cheval, en grande sueur et en grand travail, arrivèrent à Notre-Dame de Sarrance."'—*L'Heptaméron.* Préface.

with the scoffing and irreligious spirit of his age, as may be recognised in the following description of his excursion, which he addressed in a letter to his friend, the poet and philosopher Parny:—'We selected that day to pay our devotions at the Abbey of St. Savin; that is to say, to dine there at the expense of St. Benedict. The spire of the abbey may be seen at a distance between Argèles and Pierrefitte. One ascends under the shade by a rather rugged road, impenetrable to the rays of the sun and watered by an infinity of streams flowing down from the mountain. It may be well to let you know that we travelled some of us in carriages, others on horseback, and that the greater part of our company was mounted, "tant bien que mal," upon donkeys. Thus our arrival was a triumph. The ladies were received by the prior to the sound of the organ, which, thanks to the ability of his cook, was the only instrument that he could inspire; he presented each lady with a bouquet of flowers and a handsome compliment. . . . The house is well built, spacious, and in the finest position in the world. From the first terrace of the garden the eye ranges over the rich and magnificent plain of Argèles, which is fully equal to the famous valley of Campan; one never grows weary of beholding it. We passed the day very agreeably, but almost entirely at table. It was late in the evening when we returned, and we had no other accident than the loss of one of our donkeys, which, affecting to think that we had driven him too hard in the morning, pretended that he could not go any farther, and took it into his head to lie down and die on the road. We celebrated this fatality in extemporaneous couplets, to which each one contributed. I send you a specimen:—

'"Le trépas de la vieille ânesse,
Qu'on magnétisa, mais en vain
(Trop sotte était la sotte espèce);
Le long dîner, la courte messe,
Lá chère fine et le bon vin,
L'enjoûment et la politesse
Du bon prieur de St.-Savin."'

Thus it would seem that at an epoch when Voltairian liberalism had already commenced by sneers and ridicule the first skirmishes of that great war which was soon to float its banner over the guillotine, the monks of St. Savin were not spared, and their hospitality was requited by impertinence. Notwithstanding, the noble church and the relics of St. Savin were respected even during the Reign of Terror; and when the sale of this ancient sanctuary was decreed by the National Assembly, the faithful mountaineers purchased it, together with a small farm, which they assigned to its support, in perpetuity. St. Savin owes much to his Excellency the late M. Achille Fould, who, although a Protestant, exerted himself much in its behalf. Through his intermediation, the government has become the proprietor of the old abbey, and is engaged upon its restoration. Nothing now remains of a monastery that exercised such influence and enjoyed such celebrity during long centuries except the refectory, and a small apartment called the chapter-room. The rest of the building has been so completely modified that it is difficult to think it had ever been a great monastery.

I will conclude this account with the description of it, as it was in the sixteenth century, left by its last prior, Dom Charles Gérard:—'The monastery of St. Savin, of the congregation of St. Maur, of the order of St. Benedict, situated on the slopes of the Pyrenees at a quarter of a league from the high road to Barèges and to Cauterets, consists of four blocks of buildings. At the eastern side, on the ground floor, are the sacristy, a small chapter room, a room for the archives, a small storehouse, and an office: the entire is vaulted. On the first storey is a dormitory, consisting of eleven small cells. On the second is another dormitory with the same number of cells. On the third floor are the garrets. On the ground floor of the northern side is a great staircase in wood, which leads to the top of the building. The refectory is over the cellar; there are two pantries, one above and one below; and then come the kitchen, vestibule, hall, and office. On the first floor there

is a capitular hall, which consists of four rooms, with a saloon in the centre. These apartments are used for the accommodation of strangers and invalids; over these again are garrets. On the ground floor of the southern side are the bakery, a court-yard, and the stables, built on the site of the old abbatial house. Over the stables are lofts for hay and straw, and over these are other lofts for sundries.

'In the centre is the church, which is vaulted, and forms a cross, with a dome, on the top of which is a spire shaped like a cone. The high altar is of marble of different kinds and colours: the stalls are those of an old choir, which have not been properly fitted to the wainscoting. In the south side of the church there is an ancient clock and organ, with two chapels; one dedicated to St. Peter, the other to St. Catherine. On the left side there are two more chapels; one dedicated to the blessed Virgin, and the other to St. Benedict; and near it a wooden staircase mounts to the dormitory. The monastery still possesses about 108 acres, which produce hay, fruit, and vegetables, to the value of about three hundred francs. This enclosure contains also an extensive pasturage, a long terrace, and a large court-yard.'

This same account states that the monastery of St. Savin supported six hundred poor persons daily during Lent. The list of its abbots does not commence before the tenth century. The first was in 944, Enecus, 'vir maximæ sanctitatis;' the last, and forty-sixth in number, was named Junot, elected in 1782.

St. Savin also has its sanctuary to Mary. Her chapel, dedicated to our Lady of Dolours, and called 'La Piétat,' stands upon a conspicuous mound, and is about two kilomètres distant from the church. It is visited by occasional pilgrims; but upon the Feast of Corpus Christi there is a procession from the church to the chapel, which attracts the devout people from the surrounding villages. It was formerly a votive chapel, supposed to date from the eighth century, and supported by the alms of the pilgrims, and the produce of a small field, which averaged

annually about three sacks of corn. There is a group in stone, over the doorway, of our Lady of Dolours, with our dead Lord on her knees, which is not deficient in merit. The interior of the chapel is much dilapidated, and sorely needs repair; the walls have large openings in them, caused by an earthquake about ten years ago. The view from this chapel of the valley and of the village and church of St. Savin is very beautiful.

Lower down the road, on the way to Pierrefitte, stands the decaying Château of Miremont, built by the Béarnais poet D'Espourrin. It was there he lived and composed those sweet pastorals of which I have already made mention; and surely it is a spot that might well have inspired the mountain poet's tuneful lay. On the right side of the road there is a pedestal, with some verses in French, and the inscription:—

AU POËTE D'ESPOURRIN,
1678—1742:
LA SOCIÉTÉ ACADÉMIQUE
DES HAUTES-PYRÉNÉES. 1867.

I did not copy the verses. It was here that I parted company with the good curé, to whose cordiality and intelligence I acknowledge much obligation. A mist was gathering on the hills, which overtook me in the gorge of Pierrefitte, as I took my journey on foot back to Barèges through that sublime defile which leads into the rich and leafy plain of pleasant Luz.

I have loved to dwell long upon the history of good St. Savin. It is so refreshing in these our days of idle thought, dissolute reading, and profane example, to make companionship with such a life as I have been enabled here to present to my English readers. If they derive half the charm from its contemplation that I have done, my labour, which has been one of love, will have been one also of profit. Sweet reader, let us then recite together and for each other the prayer to St. Savin. It is a paraphrase of the anthem in the office of his Feast:—'O decus ecclesiæ, nostrorum pater et dux egregie, sancte Savine,

patriæ defensor pariterque custos, gregem tibi commissum ad tua solemnia devote currentem ab omni clade benigne defende.'

'O thou glory of the Church, admirable father and model of our ancestors, blessed St. Savin, powerful protector, tutelary angel of this country, which was the theatre of thy sublime virtues; belonging to a foreign country which offered to you its most seductive honours, the designs of Providence and thy own great love of solitude brought thee into our valley. Do not forget this faithful people, which always preserves a pious and grateful recollection of the preference which thou gavest to their country. Protect us against every misfortune. Intercede for us with God, that the faith which thou hast bequeathed to us may daily become more lively and ardent; that peace and charity may reign for ever in the land, sanctified by thy prayers and watered by thy tears. Exercise still amongst us that wonderful power over evil spirits which God gave to thee; protect us against these cruel enemies of our souls. Show thyself propitious, O great saint, to the prayers of those who, prostrate before thy glorious tomb, celebrate thy virtues and implore thy powerful protection. Saint Savin, pray for us!'*

* Appendix M.

ST. AVENTIN D'AQUITAINE.

ST. AVENTIN D'AQUITAINE.

(Vallée de Larboust.)

Enfant du pays, élevé dès mon bas âge auprès du tombeau de St. Aventin, ma vénération pour lui a grandi avec les années; elle m'inspire le désir de la communiquer. Pourrais-je mieux y réussir qu'en consacrant quelques heures de loisir à tracer sur le papier ce que mes recherches les plus scrupuleuses m'ont fait découvrir d'admirable dans la vie de ce saint martyr? Puissent mes faibles efforts payer la dette de reconnaissance que m'ont fait contracter les bienfaits d'Aventin! Puisse surtout cet écrit augmenter la piété des fidèles, et venger la gloire du saint martyr des récits anti-religieux de certains auteurs qui, écrivant sur le Luchon, n'ont pas craint d'insulter à la piété des fidèles, en jetant la dérision sur une légende et des traditions dont ils n'ont point interrogé la valeur!'

Such is the eloquent language in which the Abbé de Treille, Curé of Cièrp, on the road to Luchon from Montrejeau, concludes the introduction to his interesting 'Notice historique sur saint Aventin d'Aquitaine, Martyr.' Although my veneration to the martyr's tomb has been only that of a pilgrim stranger, it is in the spirit of this language that I undertake the following narrative of his life and account of the church dedicated to his name. It belongs most especially to the 'sanctuaries and shrines' of the Pyrenees. The Abbé de Treille takes his information, to a considerable extent, from the traditions of the country, assisted by a manuscript, which was long pre-

served among the archives of the parish. This manuscript is a translation of an ancient work, written in Latin, with the title, *Vita Sancti Aventini, Aquitani.* It was kept in a metal box, which was placed, with the relics of the saint, behind the high altar of the church, and was much injured by time and damp. The 'Notice historique,' although published so lately as 1850, at Toulouse, is now very rare; I am indebted for a copy of it to the uncle of the author, the venerable and saintly Abbé Cassère, Curé of Montauban, a priest not less distinguished for the sanctity of his life than for his supernatural wisdom, gentle manners, and striking appearance. His fame as a confessor draws innumerable penitents to seek the benefit of his ghostly advice, and, at certain hours, one seldom finds his confessional untenanted. No one can have sojourned any time at Bagnères-de-Luchon without having visited the picturesque cascade at Montauban and the romantic grounds about it, which are the property of the curé, and kept in good order by him for the benefit of the poor. He has lately built an exquisite new church; it possesses a very peculiar representation of the Apparition of our Lady of La Salette—the figures in marble being almost life-size. The church has a handsome subterranean chapel and crypt that should be visited.

The ancient church of St. Aventin is situated upon an eminence, about five kilomètres from Luchon, to the right of the road that leads to the Lac d'Oo and to Bagnères-de-Bigorre, and overlooks the picturesque valley of Larboust, on the southern slope of the mountain, which divides that valley from the valley d'Oueil, known to antiquity as *Vallis Oculi.* In order to imbue my readers with a full knowledge of the character and labours of St. Aventin, it will be necessary to review briefly the state of religion in that country at the period when he flourished. The see of Comminges was vacant, and the whole country was delivered up to the domination of the Saracens, who rendered the practice of the Catholic religion dangerous and difficult, and the exercise of its ministry almost im-

possible, when Aventin was sent by Providence to fulfil his mission.

The valley of LARBOUST is one of the most pleasant and fertile in the Pyrenees. It is situated at the extreme frontier of France, and surrounded by lofty mountains; the gorge of Paysas, which leads to it, being formerly impracticable, it must have been very difficult of access in earlier times. A quantity of wild shrubs covered the land which is now cultivated; and it is thought that its name was derived, during the dominion of the Romans, from that fact, expressed by the Latin word *Arbustus*. Its original inhabitants were the Convenæ. According to the most authentic historical testimony, there existed in the centre of the Pyrenees, between the Celtic and Iberian races, a population which participated of the character of these two great families. Their language, their customs, and their religious ideas present frequent traces of mingled Iberian and Celtic influences. These interno-Pyrenean tribes sprang from the Spanish and Gallic races, who, previous to the Roman invasion, had taken refuge in the Pyrenees to escape from the brutal tyranny of the devastators of Spain. These emigrants were increased by the remnant of the army of Sertorius, which had been overthrown by the victorious Pompey. But Pompey pursued them, and, compelling them to descend from the summits of the mountains, gathered them into one city, which he called URBS CONVENARUM. Hitherto, these people had lived in scattered villages, abandoned to plunder and brigandage, so that St. Jerome, who is the only ancient writer that gives any detail concerning these tribes, says, in describing Vigilantius, who was born amongst them, 'that his conduct was worthy of the scion of a race of brigands, descended from a mixture of outcasts.' As population increased, these hordes extended themselves into the remotest gorges, and transformed into fertile plains the hitherto uncultivated valleys.

It may not be supposed that these populations, confined to the centre of the Pyrenees, could participate much in

the civilisation of the period; but if we credit the account of the historian Justin, the polish of Rome and the elegance of Greece had penetrated along the highways which the Romans had constructed during their occupation of the country. Numerous monuments attest that these mountaineers were not strangers to art; and the frequent analogy of the vulgar idiom with Greek and Latin proves that these languages had been familiar to them. Later, when the Roman dominion had disappeared, and the city of Convenæ had become a mass of ruins, this refinement and cultivation gave place to ignorance and barbarity; constant warfare desolated the land, and during the seventh and eighth centuries the life of this people was a life of combat, and consequently a life of poverty and terror.

Such was the history of Larboust and the circumjacent valleys in early times. However, necessity taught them industry; they reclaimed the wild nooks of the barren hills, and by degrees the most elevated positions were rendered inhabitable. Gradually villages and small towns multiplied, until, at the present day, one sees with astonishment the slopes and the summits of the mountains studded with numerous hamlets and habitations. Their means of support are derived solely from agriculture, and cattle roam their hills in countless herds.

The valley of Larboust is divided into three parts. Upper Larboust, so called because it dominates the valley, is a charming plateau covered with many villages, intermingled with green fields and flowery meadows. Here still exist the ruins of some of the oldest habitations in the country. In this part of the valley stood the Château d'Aubespin, of which Marca makes mention in his history of Bearn; here also stood a convent of Benedictines, who have bequeathed their name to a fountain designated to this day *Hont Moungeaou*, or the Monks' Fountain. Local tradition assures us that the monks used to come to this fountain every morning to soften the hard crust which constituted their nourishment!

The second part of Larboust was called *Terre-Basse*, or Lowland. It comprises the villages of St. Aventin, formerly called Sainte-Marie, Castillon, and Cazeaux. At the last-named there is an old church of the fourteenth century, in the Romanesque style, decorated with some very grotesque paintings on the walls.

The third part of the valley extends from the village of Oo to the Spanish frontier, and forms almost a second valley, known as the Val d'Asto. The lower part is soft and beautiful, with mountains charmingly undulated, but as one ascends vegetation ceases, and Nature presents her severest aspect. This explanation will be found useful in following the footsteps of St. Aventin's missionary life, which have left their prints deeply marked everywhere throughout this country.

Christianity was professed in Larboust from the earliest ages of the Church. St. Saturninus, who preached the faith at Toulouse, and sealed his mission with his blood, had been amongst these hills; St. Exupère, one of his successors and a native of the town of Arreau, which is not far from Larboust, contributed by his preaching in the valley to the extension and progress of religion. But the integrity of the faith did not remain unattacked even here. The heretic Vigilantius was born near Larboust, and succeeded to some small extent in disseminating the poison of his doctrines among his compatriots.* When the Sara-

* Vigilantius was a priest of Barcelona, and was born at Calagergis, now Saint Martory, in the Department of the Upper Garonne. He originally carried on the business of an innkeeper in Spain; but imposed himself as a pious man who desired to become a priest on St. Paulinus, who recommended him to St. Jerome. After a short time he attached himself to the enemies of St. Jerome, and propounded several heretical doctrines, which provoked the zeal of that illustrious father of the Church. Addressing Vigilantius, he said: 'A talent for tasting wine and comprehending the sacred Scriptures is not quite the same thing. If you have the pretension of devoting yourself to the labours of the mind, prepare yourself first by studying the elements of grammar, rhetoric, logic, and philosophy; and when you have mastered these things, then learn to be silent.' Vigilantius despised these wise counsels, and commenced by preaching against virginity, the monastic state, and the celibacy of the clergy. He attacked as idolatrous and superstitious the practice of paying veneration to relics, and of using lighted tapers, during the daytime, in their honour and before their shrines. His partisans in Larboust do not appear to

cens overran the country, and remained masters of it, they too endeavoured to establish their faith at the point of the scimitar.

The valley of Larboust possesses many churches remarkable for their antiquity, the purity of their style, and the solidity of their architecture. I have mentioned that of Cazeaux, in the village of Oo ;. it is a small church of the purest and most perfect Romanesque style. There is infinite variety in the carving of the cornices, and a prodigality of cut stone, on which no labour has been spared. The valley of Oueil, which takes its name from its topographical configuration, *Vallis Oculi*, has several old churches of great interest, which I cannot stop to describe or enumerate. It is supposed that most of these churches were erected by the Chapter of Comminges, and several of them owe their origin to the zeal of the Benedictines, who flourished in the valley from the tenth century.

These churches were deprived of their pastors during a considerable period. In the sixth century the see of Comminges was rendered vacant by the impiety of Gondebaud, who banished Bishop Rupin, on the pretext of his fidelity to his sovereign. From that period this see was not filled during a space of two hundred years, when it was once more occupied by a prelate named Abraham. During this disastrous bereavement the number of priests in the diocese was very small, so few that they seldom were able to visit the mountain parishes. It may be a matter of wonder that they retained a spark of religion or remembered its practices during this calamitous time, when neglect threatened to complete the spiritual desolation that tyranny had originated. In all human probability the Catholic faith would have been extinguished if Providence had not looked upon his people with an eye of pity, and raised up a holy missioner to revive in their hearts its expiring embers. It was at such a time and

have been numerous; as, on the contrary, the Convenæ were remarkable for their zeal in venerating the saints and their relics. Their simple faith has been an enduring protest against the heresiarch who was born amongst them.

under such circumstances of the country that St. Aventin was born.

The house in which he first saw the light stood upon the spot now occupied by the church. He was born about the year 778, during the reign of Charlemagne, whose victorious arms had then sustained a reverse from the mountaineers of Gascony, in revolt against him; it was thus, in the midst of civil war and turmoil, St. Aventin commenced his short but glorious career. While his mother yet bore him in her womb, she had a presentiment that an extraordinary destiny awaited her offspring; and, as if to foretell his mission, his birth was accompanied by a circumstance which was deemed miraculous. When the full time had arrived, she was seized with violent pains, which continued so long that the physicians gave her up as lost, and despaired of being able to save the child. The midwife who attended her, seeing that all human means were unavailing, addressed her prayers to Heaven, and implored the divine assistance for her beloved mistress. She was a heretic, brought up in the errors of Vigilantius, but she had often heard the Catholics speak of the miraculous effects produced by the use of holy water. Full of faith, and with a presentiment of success, she caused a tub of holy water to be brought, and in it immersed the feet of the dying lady, who had scarcely dipped them in the water than all her pains ceased, and she was safely delivered of her precious burden.

This event is recorded on the sculpture of the doorway of the church. On the capital of one of the lateral columns, the mother of Aventin is represented in the act of withdrawing her feet from a tub of water; and on the other side, a woman is seen holding up an infant in her hands, which she exhibits with much joy; an angel hovers over the scene, and points with its finger to the new-born child. It may be regarded as a testimony to the extraordinary character of his birth, when we find that in the twelfth century the circumstances attending it were stereotyped in marble, and thus preserved to our days, as if an

indisputable confirmation of the truth of the old chronicle. Predestined from his mother's womb, the holy water, by means of which his own and his mother's life had been saved, soon flowed over his head in the regenerating stream of baptism; and his youthful soul grew in holiness and grace, with a precocity that displayed itself from his earliest years. We are told that his childhood never lost its baptismal innocence, and that his manhood offered the spectacle of a purity that was never sullied.

'Happy those children,' writes the Abbé de Treille, 'who from their infancy follow the sweet impulses of grace, and are never unfaithful to its inspirations. Happy the mother whose chaste caresses meet in her child that angelic purity which vice shall never tarnish. Christian mothers who desire that their children should be saints, should learn, like the mother of Aventin, that it is in the cradle the work of sanctification must be commenced. It is while the heart is undefiled, and flowing with the gifts of the Most High, that it will most readily imbibe virtue; for it is then that, because of its innocence, the divine eye of Providence regards childhood with peculiar complacence. It is then that the parental eye should watch most closely to prevent early contagion, and to shelter the young heart from the noxious breath of sin, that it may never blast the holiness which is conferred by baptism, and which cannot be preserved except by the utmost care and vigilance.' * Alas! how imperfectly is it that even the best intentioned parents, now-a-days, take to heart this solemn obligation, and how speedily do vice, anger, self-will, self-love, falsehood, and immorality rend in twain the baptismal robe, and pollute the young soul that was created for God alone! 'Ayez pitié des âmes livrées aux scandales de l'esprit, à cet âge où le bizarre essai d'une ignorante et maladroite raison tourne l'intelligence contre la vérité!' (P. Gratry.)

History has not preserved much concerning the early life of St. Aventin; enough, however, is known to assure

* *Notice historique sur saint Aventin*, p. 35.

us that the spirit of election which presided at his cradle did not desert him in the days of his youth. The old chronicle tells us that, as he advanced in years, he became an object of admiration and veneration to all by whom he was surrounded. His mind did not hunger after the pleasures and dissipations of the world, but was drawn insensibly to the desire of heavenly things. God had selected him to be an apostle, and, that he might be prepared for so sublime a mission, He inspired Aventin with the love of solitude; and, while still very young, listening to these yearnings, he withdrew into the desert. In that part of the valley of Larboust which is nearest to the Lac de Séculejo, better known as the Lac d'Oo, there is another valley still more solitary. At first pleasant and smiling, its aspect becomes solemn and severe as one approaches the base of the mountain. There, at the extremity of a plateau, where solitude reigns in perpetual silence, and where numerous fragments of rocks attest former catastrophes, may still be seen the ruins of an ancient hermitage. It was there that Aventin passed his youth, under the glimmer of the everlasting snows, and protected by his loneliness and austerities from any hankering after the seductions of the world that he had left. This place is still an object of veneration to the mountaineers, on whose hearts devotion to his memory and to the places which he had frequented is deeply engraved. When the peasant sees at a distance this spot rendered famous by the residence of the servant of God, he puts down his load, and, looking towards the ruins, implores with fervour the intercession and protection of St. Aventin. How great is the memory of the saints! Ten centuries have passed away, but his memory survives, and that faith, of which he was the apostle, is still green and immortal. 'May the pious inhabitants of these valleys,' exclaims the biographer of St. Aventin, 'long continue to bend the knee before the venerated footsteps of their martyr apostle, who watches over them from heaven; long may they salute with respect the marks of

his feet. So long as devotion to St. Aventin shall exist in their hearts, the faith which he implanted in them cannot perish!'

We cannot doubt that the life of St. Aventin in the desert was one of sacrifice and self-immolation. The whole of the day and part of the night spent in prayer, constant maceration of his body, continued sighings, like the spouse in the canticle, after the beloved of his soul—'Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem; terrible as an army set in array'—must have been the occupation of Aventin during his retirement. The reputation of his sanctity was noised throughout the mountains, and multitudes invaded his solitude to receive advice and edification. An event is recorded to have happened at this period, which is still current in the traditions of the people, and has been considered deserving of a place in the chronicle of his life. I will recount it, and leave my readers to accept or reject it, according to their judgment or their fancy.

Aventin had left his cave one day, and, according to his custom, had gone to a wood, which overhung the Val d'Asto, that he might pray undisturbed in the thickest of its shade. On his knees, with his eyes fixed upon heaven, he raised up his heart to God and sang his praises aloud. 'O ye heavens, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all power. O all ye waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all power.'* The most profound silence ensured him from distraction, and his soul expanded as if it was already absorbed in the calm serenity of heaven itself. On a sudden this delicious trance was disturbed by the moaning of a bear, which was descending from the summit of the mountain, apparently with pain and difficulty. Aventin perceived the animal, but felt no alarm; his confidence was too profoundly placed upon that Providence who had protected Daniel in the lions' den. 'Then the king said, Let all the inhabitants of the whole earth fear

* Daniel iii. 59, 60.

the God of Daniel: for he is the Saviour, working signs and wonders in the earth: who hath delivered Daniel out of the lions' den.'* In the mean time the bear approached the holy solitary with lamblike gentleness, and raising up its wounded paw, where a large thorn had entered, extended it to the hermit, as if begging for relief. The servant of God at once took the bear's foot and extracted the thorn, receiving in return the not ungentle caresses of his awkward patient. This occurrence is depicted in a painting over the high altar in the church of St. Aventin; and a little oratory has been erected on the spot where this is said to have happened, in order that so remarkable an event might be kept in perpetual remembrance.

However desirous Aventin may have been to spend his life in this solitude, the designs of God had destined him for a different career. The same voice which had called him to the desert once more echoed in his ear, and summoned him to another course of action; and at the command of his bishop he found himself compelled to abandon that sweet retirement, where he had experienced so many spiritual consolations, and to enter upon the rugged and thorny path of the apostolate. After two centuries of widowhood, the see of Comminges was once more occupied by a worthy prelate. Bishop Abraham looked about him, among his scattered priesthood, for assistance; and foremost amongst them Aventin was pointed out to his notice. Having conversed with and examined him, he sent him into Larboust, where he soon distinguished himself by his apostolic exertions. A sculpture in white marble, which decorates the front of the church of St. Aventin, represents him in the attitude of preaching. There is also still preserved, in the parish of Garin, a granite basin, which he used when administering baptism. He preached the Gospel throughout the whole of this district; and the tradition of the country to this day regards him as the restorer of the faith which had suffered so long an eclipse.

* Daniel xiv. 42.

Since that epoch, Larboust has been distinguished above all other Pyrenean valleys for the purity of its faith and morals, a distinction which is attributed to the intercession and protection of St. Aventin. Although the saints may leave this earth, the graces and blessings which their holy lives have earned remain behind them, shedding an odour of sanctity round the places where their foot-prints have left their marks. But the ministry of Aventin was not to be exempt from trouble and persecution. The followers of Mahomet, having overrun Spain, passed the mountain and became masters of Narbonne, about the year 719. Finally they were defeated by Charles Martel, and pursued and driven back by Charlemagne. They, however, occupied the Pyrenees for many years, and during that period had exercised a cruel persecution against its Christian inhabitants. Even after they had been forced to withdraw into Spain, they made frequent raids upon the Pyrenean valleys, and stationed themselves in its verdant nooks with the expectation of being able to renew their conquests at some future period. It was during this occupation that religion suffered most severely, and that the Christians needed all the energy of their faith to enable them to resist the fury of their invaders, whose zeal sought to spread their errors wherever they marched, enforcing their doctrines at the point of the sword. Although no personal danger could intimidate his apostolic courage, Aventin could not but feel alarm at the approach of an enemy that brought terror and desolation among his flock. But he was as prudent as he was courageous; and thus it was that he administered the Sacraments, and instructed his people in secrecy. This was the more necessary, as they were exposed not only to the bad treatment, but also to the corrupting influences of the Saracens, who left no means untried to uproot their faith and establish the crescent on the fragments of the cross.

It was not, however, possible that his efforts could remain long concealed from his enemies. He became the object of their unrelenting pursuit, from which he often

found it difficult to procure a place of safe retreat. However, the hand of God was frequently made visible in his protection; when, tracked to his hiding-place, and almost surrounded on all sides, a sudden interposition would snatch him from their grasp, and either divert their attention, or place him beyond their reach. Sometimes concealed in the depths of the forest, sometimes hid in the hollow of the rock, he escaped the vengeance of his pursuers, who sought him with untiring energy; for they believed that if they succeeded in smiting the shepherd, the flock would readily become their prey.

The old chronicle relates that, upon one occasion, when he had gone into the valley of Oueil to minister to the Christians there, his retreat was discovered by the Saracens. He fled, and directed his course towards the huge rock which dominates the tower of Castel-Blancat. Harassed by fatigue, he felt that he must be overtaken by his pursuers; when, lifting up his heart to God, he invoked the assistance of his blessed Mother. He was inspired, at the same instant, with superhuman strength; and, clearing at a bound the abyss which yawned beneath him, he landed upon a rock of granite at the opposite side. The impression of his feet may still be seen upon it. The rock from which he leaped, and the stone upon which he descended, are still pointed out by the guide who conducts the traveller from Luchon to the Lac d'Oo.*

The Saracens, astonished at the manner in which their pursuit was frustrated, stood aghast on the brink of the chasm, and withdrew. But this evident interposition of God for the protection of his servant did not mollify their revengeful hearts; it rather rendered them more earnest

* The Abbé de Treille writes on the subject of this tradition as follows:—'Pourquoi vouloir qu'Aventin ait franchi cet espace? que son pied se soit imprimé sur la pierre, comme sur un léger duvet? Mais qui connaît les desseins de Dieu? En rendant les Musulmans témoins d'un miracle, n'est-ce pas une grâce qu'il leur a faite pour leur faire ouvrir les yeux; et ce miracle répugne-t-il plus que celui qui terrassa Saul persécuteur sur le chemin de Damas? Si Dieu a permis que le pied d'Aventin se gravât sur la pierre, n'est-ce pas afin de récompenser la foi de son serviteur et transmettre aux générations les plus reculées la mémoire de sa sainteté?'—*Notice* p. 72.

in their desire for his blood. On the other hand, this miracle had a profound effect upon the Christians, who became more strongly convinced of his sanctity, and more anxious for his safety: they showed a generous rivalry in their efforts to afford him food and shelter. It is said that they used to group themselves around him in the darkness of the night, while his instructions and advice repaid them for the danger which they incurred by protecting him. They listened to him with unremitting eagerness, sometimes accompanied by a feeling of uneasiness, as a presentiment pervaded them that they would soon be deprived of their comforter and guide, who, in his ardour for the salvation of their souls, daily exposed himself to the loss of his own life. Their apprehensions were too soon realised.

The Saracens, continually engaged in his pursuit, had again succeeded in discovering his retreat. They came suddenly upon him, and again he sought safety in flight; but his work was done, and his heavenly Father no longer deemed it necessary to interpose a miracle for his preservation. His strength had been exhausted by long fastings and unceasing missionary fatigues, and he was scarcely able to reach the junction of the valleys of Oueil and Larboust, both of which had been the scenes of his labours, when, sinking down wearied and worn out, he was overtaken by his enemies. The hour of sacrifice and of reward had come: he fell upon his knees, offered his soul to its Creator, poured forth one last prayer, and cast one last look upon that valley and for that people which had been so dear to him. While in this attitude the infuriated soldiery flung themselves upon him, exulting in the capture of a prey that had so long baffled them; they maltreated him with blows and scoffs, until at last, one more sanguinary than the rest with one fell blow struck his head from his body. But what must have been the consternation of the assassins when they beheld Aventin rise up, take his bleeding head in his hands, and walk towards his native village! Struck with terror at the

miracle, and seized with remorse for their deed, they fled from the spot, and recounted to all whom they met the wonderful event. It is said that Aventin continued his miraculous walk for about two hundred paces, until he came to the spot from which could be seen the valley where he had lived and laboured, and there fell on the side of the road.

The appalling news of his death was soon echoed from mouth to mouth, a veil of mourning descended upon Larboust, whose Christian inhabitants had lost their friend and father, their guide and their support. Some pious hands buried the mutilated body in secret during the night, and carefully kept concealed the place of interment lest it should be violated by the barbarians. At a later period, when the Saracens had withdrawn, a mark of recognition was placed over the spot where he had been decapitated, as well as over that where his headless trunk had fallen. Both these places have become objects of pilgrimage, and the pilgrims respectfully kiss the rock that had been sprinkled with the blood of the martyr. A small monument erected upon the spot still perpetuates the memory of his happy death, and a modest chapel, overhanging the high road, stands upon the place where his body had been interred. Many miraculous cures are stated to have been performed at both these spots. Undeviating tradition has handed down the details of this martyrdom, and so vivid was the recollection of it in the twelfth century that we find it related in stone upon the front of the church of St. Aventin, which dates from that period. On the capitals of the columns a group of soldiers is represented; they are endeavouring to snatch from the hands of a decapitated trunk its own head, which it is carrying away.

Pepin, King of Aquitaine, renewed the war against the Saracens, and drove them beyond the Spanish frontier. Assisted by the Counts Ebles and Asnarius, he pursued them over the mountains, and laid siege to Pampeluna. Larboust was delivered from its oppressors by this expe-

dition, which took place in 824. Religion once more was enabled to resume its splendour, its people might pray in security, and the work for which Aventin had given his life was perfected by his successors in the ministry. The memory of his sanctity, his death and miracles, was transmitted from father to son, the places which had been signalised by his seclusion and austerities were honoured, and his martyrdom became a theme of admiration and instruction to the young and of glory and edification to the old.

Time, however, and the catastrophes of war had somewhat dimmed these holy memories, and the spot where his body had been interred was no longer known. Three centuries had passed away, and men began to ask each other concerning the spot where those precious remains had been laid. No clue existed among living men, when the discovery was made in one of those wonderful ways which we find often employed by the Almighty for the glorification of his saints. A bull, in spite of the watchfulness of the herdsman, took to straying from a rich pasture on which the herd was feeding, and making its way to a distant place, used to bellow loudly and tear up the ground with its feet. It was with difficulty and by force of blows that they could drive it away and make it return to the cowshed. This occurred during several consecutive days, and becoming the talk of the neighbourhood, village curiosity grew excited. Many conjectures were formed, until at last the priests themselves exhibited some interest in the matter. It was resolved to dig up and examine the spot, that they might ascertain the cause of this bull's predilection. A number of people attended; the bull, faithful to his daily habit, was also there; he no longer beat the ground, but remained quietly watching the proceeding, when suddenly an angel was seen in the skies, and pointing with its finger to the place on which the bull stood, distinctly cried out, 'There rests the body of blessed Aventin!' ('C'est là que repose le corps du bienheureux Aventin!').

These words resolved the mystery, and were received by the crowd with acclamations of joy. The name of Aventin flew from mouth to mouth, and they hastened to dig up the earth, when they discovered a tomb. An express was sent to the bishop, Bertrand de l'Ille, as the priests who were present did not consider themselves worthy to touch the sacred remains. He despatched two members of the chapter to examine into the circumstances, and was himself present at the enquiry. Having interrogated witnesses, they caused the tomb to be opened, and disinterred the bones, from which a delicious odour exhaled, so that the entire multitude felt as if embalmed by its aroma. The delegates of the bishop and the bystanders fell simultaneously upon their knees, and all sought to kiss the blessed relics. They proceeded to examine the body with the greatest care; they found that the head had been separated from the trunk, which fact, with other indications, left no doubt that these were truly the remains of 'blessed Aventin,' as the angel had designated him.

Then arose a dispute between the inhabitants of the two valleys as to the possession of the relics; when the delegates had recourse to a clever expedient to decide their rival pretensions. They caused a dray to be constructed, and two bullocks to be harnessed to it—one from each of the contending villages. They then set them in movement, and left them to take their course, when they quietly took the direction of the little village where Aventin had been born, and halted at the spot where, during his lifetime, he had erected a small oratory. This stood at the side of the house in which he had first opened his eyes. Thus an end was put to the pious contest, and his remains were deposited, after the lapse of three centuries, in the very spot where he had been rocked in his cradle, and where he had learned to love God from the lips of his devout mother.

In progress of time the gifts of the pilgrims who frequented his shrine and were witnesses to many miracles, assisted by the generosity of the Bishop of Comminges,

enabled the Catholics of Larboust and Oueil to erect a handsome basilica on the spot where the oratory had stood, and over the ruins of his parental home. Nothing was neglected that might render it worthy of its object: its architecture is good—the Romanesque, so common in this country; numerous carvings in stone adorn the front and the southern wall. The biography of the saint is graven upon them: there is the image of the bull in the act of pawing the ground, and the figure of the angel pointing its finger, as well as those other incidents of his birth and death which I have already noticed.

His relics were placed behind the high altar in a tomb which has remained there to the present day. The bottom of the tomb, in which they are now contained, is composed of a large marble slab, placed between two walls, two smaller slabs form the sides, the ends are closed by two stones, sealed, and the entire tomb is covered over by a block of granite cut gablewise, and hollow inside, as if to form an arched roof over the tomb. The relics were kept in this mausoleum until 1707, when a verification of the bones was made, which substantiated their preservation and authenticity. They were then placed in a silver reliquary, which contains the head of the holy martyr. They were again examined and verified in 1737, again in 1777, a fourth time in 1808, and lastly in 1837, by the Archbishop of Toulouse, who had them placed in a magnificent ebony *châsse* or shrine, which is carried in procession upon great festivals.

The church has a nave and aisles in the most perfect Romanesque style. The entrance to the sanctuary formerly was closed by three Romanesque gratings, remarkable for their workmanship. Two of these were taken away and sold at the epoch of the Revolution; but the third remains, and constitutes one of the curiosities of the church. The entrance merits attention. It had eight marble jamb-shafts, although Pyrenean churches of the Romanesque style seldom have more than four; three of these have now disappeared. On the capitals of these

columns again are engraved the incidents of the life and death of St. Aventin. These columns support the sections of the façade. Near the apse two votive altars, consecrated to the pagan god Abellion, are encrusted in the wall. At the side of these is a third votive altar sacred to the Shades.

This church, erected in the twelfth century by the piety of the faithful and the zeal of a holy bishop, is the most remarkable in the Pyrenees, and is visited equally by the devout Christian who comes to venerate the sacred relics which it possesses, and by the artist and the man of letters who come to admire the monumental decorations with which it is enriched. On the occasion of my first visit to it, I tendered a small remuneration to the intelligent and pious woman who showed me the church, but she refused, saying that she was paid for her work by the curé, but that if I pleased to make any offering it should be for the benefit of the church, and she pointed out to me a box into which she saw that I had already dropped a contribution. Such disinterestedness is not common in persons of her class and occupation, and deserves to be noted.

The relics of St. Aventin have been the object of constant veneration from the period of their discovery to our own times; and the faithful of the nineteenth honour them with no less fervour than did those of the twelfth century. The spectacle which these valleys offer on the annual recurrence of his feast is described as very devotional. The various parishes, with their pastors at their head, form a grand procession to do homage to their patron. The hills re-echo with the sound of psalmody, and choirs of mountain maidens, clad in white, mingle their voices in melodious prayer. They all carry long flambeaux, the blaze of which illuminates the church with dazzling light. At the appointed moment, each person approaches the ebony shrine, kisses the relics, and deposits a gift in proportion to his means or inclination. The fervour and faith exhibited on these occasions are very

touching, and in their simplicity have been known frequently to draw tears from the eyes of unbelieving worldlings.

A custom prevails which is further expressive of their confidence in the saint—that of consecrating to him their new-born babes. The day of consecration is a festival day in the family. Several members of it go off at early morning, attired in their holiday costume, and carrying in arms, or leading by the hand, the child, according to its age. On arriving at the church, they kneel respectfully before the reliquary; Mass is celebrated on the tomb of the martyr, during which the child and its friends, with lighted tapers in their hands, lovingly kiss the relics. After Mass, the priest gives his benediction to the child, and the whole party retire. The tapers are left lighted for the rest of the day before the shrine, as an emblem of the burning faith which animates the donors. The origin of this custom is attributed to a calamity which had afflicted several families of the valley. At different periods many of them lost their children shortly after their birth, successively and unaccountably. In their grief these Christian mothers conceived the idea of consecrating their offspring to St. Aventin, and from the hour that they executed this vow the anger of God was appeased; and the cradle that a mother's joy had decked with flowers was no more darkened by the untimely hand of death.

Many miracles are recorded to have taken place through the mediation of St. Aventin. I will mention a few in illustration. A deadly plague had ravaged the mountains of Venasque, and the flocks and herds perished in great numbers. It was suggested to the mountaineers to invoke the intercession of that holy hermit who once had been their apostle; they did so, and the dire disease disappeared. In gratitude, the shepherds of Venasque bound themselves by vow to make a pilgrimage every year to the tomb of St. Aventin, and there renew their thanks for the favours received through his interposition. And yearly these Spanish pilgrims come from Venasque, on the day

of his festival, to offer at his shrine their prayers, accompanied by a large wax candle, richly ornamented. This custom continued until the Revolution, which blotted out so many of the pious practices of the land.

A venerable priest states that Bernarde Merlin, widow, of the parish of Montauban, had a child, seven years of age, who had been paralysed during many years. The poor widow resolved to take it to the tomb of St. Aventin, in whom she had great confidence. On arriving at the church, she placed her beloved charge near the reliquary, and, kneeling down, in fervent prayer and tears solicited its recovery. When she had finished her prayer, she went to take up her child; but he, joyous, rose up without her aid, and threw himself on the neck of his delighted mother, crying out that he was completely cured of the disease which had so long disabled him.

M. Sacome, Curé of Oo, relates that, being a student in his youth in the house of M. Arqué, parish priest of St. Aventin, he saw arrive from Luchon, one day early in the morning, a man who requested the curé to say Mass for a lady of Bagnères-de-Bigorre who was dying; he brought with him also a wax candle, which the family of the sick person had sent to place before the tomb of the saint. The hour, nine o'clock, when the Mass was to be said was fixed upon, so that the lady and her family might unite their intention with that of the priest. The curé commenced his Mass punctually; and, at a quarter past nine, the dying person, whose agony seemed already to have commenced, rose up, quitted her bed, asked for food, and declared herself to be perfectly restored to health.

Dominiquette Pourrech, commonly called *Seigné*, of Cathervielle, had had bad eyes from her birth, and at twelve years old she had so entirely lost her sight that she could not go about without a guide. One day her mother took her to St. Aventin, and got Mass said for her recovery. While Mass was being said, the invalid experienced a sensible amelioration in her state, and, according to her own expression, felt as if balm had been put upon

her eyes. On her return, she was able to see and recognise the road, and, in a few days, was entirely cured. She never afterwards felt the slightest pain in her eyes, or debility in her sight. This account was received from her own lips.

A poor travelling artisan ascended slowly the steep hill that leads from the high road to St. Aventin; at his side was his young son, who always accompanied him upon his journeys, but who seemed to walk with pain. He supported himself with a stick, for he was lame and suffering from contraction in his joints. When they reached the church of St. Aventin, according to the pious custom of the country, they put down their knapsacks, and knelt to say a prayer in honour of the martyr. While praying, the father perceived before him the stones upon which St. Aventin had left the impression of his feet. This sight stirred in his heart a sentiment of strong faith; he recalled to his mind all that his son suffered, and turning to him, said: 'My child, let us pray to St. Aventin to cure you;' and they recited a short prayer together.

'Put the foot that is affected,' said the father, 'on the marks of St. Aventin's feet.'

The child obeyed, and his father's faith was rewarded; for, as he withdrew his foot, he found that it was restored to its former healthy condition. A year after this event the same travellers were seen prostrated in prayer at the same spot. The father was kissing affectionately the wonder-working stones; the son, equally moved, was shedding tears. A stranger who looked on, struck by the spectacle, said to them:

'What are you doing there? What is the cause of your tears?'

'Ah!' replied the father, 'a year ago, at this same period, St. Aventin restored my son to health;' and he related to him the foregoing account.

This event is one of comparatively recent date. For a more ample detail of the miracles which are attributed to

the intercession of St. Aventin, I refer my readers to 'La Notice historique sur saint Aventin d'Aquitaine, Martyr, par un Prêtre du diocèse,' to which I have been much indebted in this narrative.

The description given of the valleys of Larboust and their patriarchal manners, by a modern writer, cannot fail to interest my readers. 'They are simple,' he writes, 'good, and hospitable, proud and courageous. They possess the headlong gaiety of the people of the south of France, and in all their private or public demonstrations exhibit much warmth and vivacity, while their language is impassioned, rapid, and metaphorical. But that which distinguishes them most especially is the purity of their morals and the firmness of their faith.' A venerable priest and doctor of theology, who more than a century ago exercised his ministry in Larboust, says of them in his time:—'The piety of our ancestors was solid and simple; they were animated by faith pure and sincere, of which there are still beautiful examples to be found. With them vanity did not endeavour to confound the distinction of classes; their expenditure did not exceed their income; the ignorant had not the pretension of passing themselves off as clever ("des beaux-esprits"), and it needed only that the Gospel should be preached to them to ensure the practice of its precepts. With them the priest was regarded almost as Providence itself, and they ever received him with respect and love ("le prêtre était la Providence incarnée; on l'environnait de respect et d'amour").'

This antique simplicity and purity of manners, as thus described by the old priest, still lingers in these valleys. The examples may be rare now-a-days, but we are told that within a few years there might have been found many families whose piety and simplicity were modelled on the character of the olden time. Parents governed their families by the example of their virtues. Every action of theirs was inspired by religion, which in all phases constituted their happiness and consolation. During

the long nights of winter, when they could not sleep, they used to recite aloud the Psalms of David, and it is said that frequently they would arouse the younger members, and call upon them to join in prayer for the souls of their departed relatives suffering in the flames of Purgatory while they were sleeping in their downy beds. What a beautiful practice! What a 'holy and wholesome thought'! I have seen the same sentiment actuating the devout matrons of Ireland, who often would interrupt their slumbers under the influence of a similar idea, that they might pray for their deceased friends, who perhaps were writhing in the cleansing fire while they were enjoying soft repose. 'For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. . . . It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.'*

> O Christ! that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be.†

Youth brought up under such training could not fail to be good and virtuous. Initiated from the earliest age in the ways of piety, the steadiness of their manhood generally bore testimony to the lessons of their boyhood. As in ancient Greece, the elders presided over their games and sanctified them by their presence, and they often mingled in their amusements and shared in their frolics. If some scandal happened to be whispered about regarding any of these young people, they were avoided by their companions, and were not admitted to take their place among them until their innocence was proved or their error expiated by long penitence. With this exception, their intercourse with each other was truly fraternal and expansive. If a stranger came among them, he was received with hospitality; every house was his home; and to have offered remuneration at his departure would

* 2 Machabees xii. 44, 46. † Tennyson, *Maud*.

have been considered an affront. The position of the priest among these people was very enviable; he was looked upon as the common father of all. When he entered a household his appearance brought joy to the family; the children rushed emulously forward to receive his benevolent caresses; the aged hung upon his words of advice and consolation, and all felt happy in his presence. Everyone was anxious for his visits, which he seldom failed to turn to their spiritual advantage; for he never left them without having spoken of the things of God and recalled to them their duty of gratitude for his mercies.

Excess was unknown among this sober and laborious people; as in the valley of Azun, the use of wine was rare, and no one in those days regarded it as necessary. Covetousness did not exist amongst them, and their only cupidity was to be able to make such addition to the portions of their children as, notwithstanding the practice of division, might preserve the same competence to each. Usury was strictly forbidden; and they went so far in this respect as not to take any interest for money lent, considering themselves to be sufficiently repaid by the ability of accommodating their neighbour in distress. Whenever a bereavement by death occurred in a family, condolence was usually expressed in the language of Job: 'God hath given to us, God hath taken away: blessed for ever be his holy name.' Such is the Arcadian picture of times and customs that have not yet quite passed away in the valley of Larboust, as given by an accomplished and well-informed pen.

At foot of the ascent to the Lac d'Oo, in the vale of Médassoles, stands a rude and lonely hospice, where travellers will find refreshment that needs the sharpness of the mountain air to render digestible or agreeable. Carriages cannot proceed farther than this inn, and the remainder of the ascent, which is little more than an hour's duration, must be made on horseback or on foot. There is a cluster of primeval beech-trees in front of the hospice, but all around it is stern and barren, although

the valley itself abounds in wild flowers, that offer much attraction to enthusiastic botanists. The daughter of the inn-keeper, about twenty years of age, was an intelligent, good-featured, civil, well-spoken young woman. I got into a conversation with her which accidentally took a controversial turn. It was on the temporal power of the Pope; and taking me to be a Protestant, she argued the question with a precision, knowledge of the subject, and orthodoxy that would have done credit to a practised theologian. And she was only the 'Maid of the Inn.' During my walks in the Pyrenees I have met with repeated instances of similar ability and information on subjects appertaining to religion in persons of her class. Where is the same to be met with in the mountains of Scotland or Wales?

Who would not willingly retrench a week from the Allée Étigny at Luchon to pass it, in refreshing simplicity, among these patriarchal mountaineers? But those who have given us the description of their ancient manners are not without apprehension of their corruption; for even now, within recent date, constant contact with the stranger has introduced the greed of gain, and the love of drink, and a disposition to extortion amongst them. In anxious alarm at the evils which threaten them, their agreeable historian cries out, at the conclusion of his work:—'Who shall save this land from impending ruin! Who shall repair the incalculable evils produced by contact with the stranger! No doubt it will be effected by the zeal of holy priests, who, like Aventin, are ever ready to sacrifice themselves for their flocks. But it is you, above all, most blessed Aventin, patron of these valleys, who from heaven above will bestow upon them a look of pity, and will still shelter them under the protecting cover of your wings. And do you, people of both valleys, arouse yourselves, and, prostrate at the foot of the tomb of Aventin, implore his succour. Pledge yourselves to cultivate the virtues which he bequeathed to you; for, unless they revive, your prosperity and your happiness will daily decline.'

'Qui donc sauvera ce pays, incliné vers sa ruine! Qui réparera les maux incalculables qu'a produit le contact étranger! Ce sera sans doute le zèle des saints prêtres, qui, comme Aventin, sauront se dévouer pour leurs troupeaux. Mais ce sera vous surtout, bienheureux Aventin, qui du haut du ciel abaisserez sur elles un regard de pitié, et les couvrirez encore sous les ailes de votre protection puissante. Peuples des deux vallées, réveillez-vous. Prosternés aux pieds du tombeau d'Aventin, implorez son secours; et jurez de faire revivre au milieu de vous les vertus qu'il vous légua, et avec lesquelles disparaissent tous les jours et votre bien-être et votre bonheur.'

ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.

ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.

O pie Bertrande,
Bone pater,
Præsul amande,
Tuis, venerande pater,
Precibus nos protege semper.
Antiphonæ.

As one travels through the well-cultivated and fertile valley from Montrejeau to Bagnères-du-Luchon, attention is arrested by a massive circumvallation of walls, enclosing a noble church in the centre, which stands upon an isolated hill to the right of the road. And when you ask, What place is this? you are told that it is St. Bertrand de Comminges. In historical recollections and religious associations St. Bertrand possesses great attractions; and the remains of the old city and its venerable cathedral well deserve the study of the archæologist and the veneration of the pilgrim. I had the satisfaction of visiting this interesting spot. Having visited it, I fain must have a word to say about it, for it justly claims a foremost position among the great sanctuaries which hallow the valleys of the Pyrenees.

The eleventh century was an epoch remarkable on many accounts in the history of the Church, but particularly for the simplicity and steadfastness of faith in the people, for the great number of saints that then flourished, for the religious institutions that were founded, and for the trials as well as the triumphs which all experienced. France, under the puissant sway of Charlemagne, had

become an empire of great magnitude: illustrious pontiffs, eminent for their knowledge, sanctity, and zeal, Sylvester II., Saint Leo IX., and Saint Gregory VII., successively occupied the See of Peter, and several religious orders—that of the Canons regular of St. Augustine, and of the Camaldoli, founded by St. Romuald, were instituted. It was in this century also that the Hospice of the Great St. Bernard, on the summit of the Alps, was established by Saint Bernard de Menthon, an enduring monument of Catholic charity, sanctifying the spot where Jupiter once had been worshipped. In this century too were established those noble convents of Valombrosa in Italy, of which our own Milton has sung, and of the Cistercians on the solitary hill near Grenoble, both of which I visited in years gone by, and both of which have since been despoiled and desecrated by the Revolution, in the outraged name of liberty.

It was in this century that our St. Bertrand was born. His father was Comte de l'Ille, belonging to a family that was distinguished in Church and State, and allied to many royal houses. His mother was daughter to the Count of Toulouse. The castle of his father has been demolished; but a house has been built upon the site, and preserves the name of Saint Bertrand. At a short distance from the town there is a fountain, which still is called by his name. Tradition tells us that therein he used every morning to take water for the holy sacrifice, as he passed to say Mass in a neighbouring chapel. It is said to retain a supernatural power, and the people of the country have recourse to it when afflicted by sickness, and frequently receive the reward of their faith in their cure.

The first care of his parents was to give him a sound religious education; and for that purpose they placed him with the Benedictine fathers at the famous Abbey of Escale-Dieu, in the valley of Capatur, near the source of the Adour.* He devoted himself with ardour to study, most

* Nothing now remains of this once celebrated abbey but the walls of the

particularly to that of the Holy Scriptures. The professors soon found their acquirements outstripped by those of their pupil, and his example in piety was not less admirable than his proficiency in learning. When arrived at the proper age, his parents, following the tradition of the family, selected for him the profession of arms. But in this career, which so often then as now exposed its followers to the corruption of idleness and profligacy, he made the glorious St. Martin his model. He applied himself, in an especial manner, to practise the virtues most opposed to the vices inherent in the military state. He was distinguished among his brother officers by the gentleness of his manners, his generosity, and his charity. Pious, modest, forbearing to his comrades, never listening to slander or calumny, never indulging in angry or passionate language, he was respectful to everyone, and thus commanded the good-will of his equals and the esteem of his superiors.

More fortunate than thousands engaged in the same profession, his piety and virtue preserved him from the dangers to which those inevitably become a prey who neglect the means of safety which he diligently employed. Bertrand was rich in the world's gifts; but far from yielding to the temptations which riches generally bring to youth, he made them the means of spiritual profit to himself and of corporal relief to others. He was equally fortunate in his exterior advantages; the manly beauty of his person was enhanced by the courtliness of his manners; but neither his wealth nor his noble birth, nor his personal attractions availed to excite in him pride or vainglory. He knew that beauty soon decays; that man's strength is like the flower which blooms in the morning, but at

church and a portion of the tower, which is used as a granary. Like Médous, Escale-Dieu is inhabited by an English Protestant, who occupies himself more with the amenities of agriculture than with recollections of the monks. The situation is well adapted to retirement and economy. There is a curious folio manuscript in the public library at Tarbes—a ledger or day-book of the receipts and expenditure of the abbey for many years previous to its destruction at the Revolution. I laid my hand upon it by accident, and regret that I had not time to make some extracts from it.

evening has perished; 'Man's days are as grass, as the flower of the field so shall he perish;' that all human stability is but as a column built on sand, which the hand of a child may overturn.

It is intelligible that the military career was but little suited to one thus constituted. He felt himself called to be a soldier of Christ, and to prepare for other combats wherein the blood of his brother Christians should never stain his hands, and withdrawing from the army, he sought to attach himself indissolubly to the service of God. In due time he was ordained, and shortly afterwards became a canon and archpriest of the Cathedral of Toulouse. While in this position he was chosen to fill the see of Comminges.

The church of Comminges dates from the earliest ages of Christianity, but various vicissitudes had contributed, at the period of Bertrand's elevation, to reduce its former splendour. The Celtic name (Lugdunum) of the city is said to indicate its existence prior to the Roman domination in Gaul. A writer of Comminges, François de Bellefourt, thus speaks of it in his 'Cosmographie universelle':—'All the excellent writers that I have quoted are enough to prove that the good people of Comminges merit to be numbered among the most ancient and respectable of all Aquitaine, seeing that they were known to Pompey, that they were amongst the oldest of the Roman colonies, that they were amongst the earliest Christians of Guienne, and likewise that they were the most scourged by the Goths and the Franks as well as by the Saracens, as may be gathered easily by intelligent persons from various histories.'

The Celtiberians, who established themselves in the Pyrenees, were composed of several tribes from Spain: the Vettones, the Arravaces, who gave their name to the town of Arreau, in the Val d'Aure, the Callagoritanes, whose capital was Calegorgis, now Saint-Martory. This latter town takes its modern name from a legend that is found in the lessons of the Breviary of Comminges for

August 26. It is also reported by St. Gregory in his homilies.

Martyri was a holy monk from the East, and he was one evening going to visit a monastery in his neighbourhood, when he met a poor leper lying by the roadside, overcome by fatigue and sickness. The hospital to which he was making his way was in the same direction as the monastery to which Martyri was bound. The good monk, moved by compassion, spread his cloak upon the ground, placed the leper upon it, and, covering him carefully, took him upon his back and continued his journey. When he had reached nearly the end of it, the Superior of the convent perceived him, and cried out:

'Haste! Open the gate! Here is brother Martyri, who is bringing our Lord!'

Thereupon the leper came down from his shoulders, and assuming the form of our Saviour in his humanity, ascended toward heaven, saying to Martyri:

'Martyri, you have had compassion on me on earth; I will glorify you in heaven.'

When he reached the monastery, the Superior asked him whom he had been carrying? when he replied, 'Oh! if I had known who it was, I never would have let him go.' And then he told them what had happened, and how he had wondered at finding his load so light.

Lugdunum took the additional name of Convenarum about seventy-two years before Christ, and began to assume importance as a city. Under the auspices of Cæsar and succeeding emperors it acquired considerable extent, as is shown by numerous sepulchral remains and other monuments. The plain which stretches away to Valcabrère and Tibiran formerly was covered with houses and villas; the number of its inhabitants has been calculated at forty thousand. An aqueduct, of which there still are considerable remains, brought water to the citadel from the fountain of Tibiran, on the Via Tibiriana. At the foot of the hill was an amphitheatre, with three rows of seats, for the combats of gladiators and wild beasts, in

which the Romans so much delighted. The remains of a *naumachia*, or enclosure for nautical sports, are still visible on the banks of the Garonne, and there has been discovered lately a large *piscina*, or pond, floored with mosaic, and having leaden pipes, which evidently belonged to the public baths. The inhabitants of Lugdunum Convenarum had the privilege of retaining their own laws for their government, and were exempt from all kinds of taxation.

Rome, while it imparted its civilisation, brought also its religion with it, adopting at the same time into its calendar the local divinities. Their idols and votive altars are frequently turned up by the ploughshare in all this vicinity, and so numerous were they at one time that Charlemagne, by an edict, directed that they should be encrusted on the walls of the churches, as an evidence of the overthrow of Paganism. The Convenæ were remarkable for the number of their deities. In addition to the great mythological gods, they erected altars to the winds, to the hills, to the streams, and to the woods. It is here that my Protestant friend of Luchon should make research for the topical divinities of Pagan antiquity, whose traditions have imbued and interested his mind so much more than those of Catholic worship.

Abellion was the principal divinity of the Convenæ: there is a tablet dedicated to him and encrusted upon the walls of St. Aventin. There was Lixoni at Luchon; Aereda, which is supposed to be the air, at Siradan; Theotani at St. Bertrand; Iscito at Garin, in Larboust; Aplato again at Luchon; Aram in the valley of Aran; and numerous others, of which I do not propose to recite the litany.

Paganism has left as its record empty tombs, disfigured medals, mutilated idols; Christianity has imprinted traces of another character, more profound and enduring. In the year 48 of our era, St. Peter sent into Gaul seven bishops, among whom were St. Trophime of Arles, St. Paul of Narbonne, St. Austremoine of Auvergne, and St. Saturninus, first bishop of Toulouse. This latter visited the

city of Comminges, which he found distinguished by the number and civilisation of its inhabitants, the greater part of whom he converted to Christianity. Lugdunum, now Comminges, although one of the privileged cities of the empire, shared the fate of its other great towns; it decayed by degrees, until it crumbled away altogether; and now, where forty thousand inhabitants once flourished, there cannot be counted more than seven hundred and forty-five. But while its Pagan glories grew dim, the light of the new faith and the labour of its missionaries shed an illuminating ray over its decline.

About the year 408 the Vandals overran the south of France, and scattered ruin and death in every direction, pillaging and burning cities, towns, and villages, levelling churches, profaning the relics of the saints, and massacring bishops and priests. Lugdunum suffered greatly during this invasion, although to some extent protected by the strength of its walls. The lower part of the city, which was spread over the plain, was devastated, but the citadel did not fall until two centuries later.

The Goths succeeded the Vandals, and founded a powerful dominion, of which Toulouse was the capital. The account given of the state of the churches in Comminges during this period is deplorable; the roofs fallen in, the doorways and windows destroyed, the aisles choked up by briars and thorns, cattle feeding on the grass which grew around the desecrated altars, and stabled in the chapels. A person named Malet was sent into the diocese of Comminges by the Arian king Evaric, with orders to extirpate the Catholics. A young shepherd, whose name was Gaudens, belonging to the town of Mas, refused compliance with some irreligious order of Malet, who forthwith commanded his head to be cut off, and the church founded by St. Saturninus to be razed to the ground. The young shepherd was justly regarded as a martyr, the name of the town was changed into that of St. Gaudens, and Bernard, Bishop of Comminges in the eleventh century, built the church over his tomb which exists at the present day.

At the commencement of Lent 586, Lugdunum was occupied by a prince called Gondebaud; he was besieged by the Burgundians, under Léodégisilus, who effected his entry into the city through treachery. The betrayer, Mommol, Count of Auvergne, was slain in the *mêlée* while sitting at his door. Sagittarius, Bishop of Gap, who was making his escape in disguise, was taken and beheaded on the spot; the inhabitants without distinction were put to the sword, the priests slain at the foot of the altar, the houses and lordly mansions demolished or delivered to the flames. St. Gregory of Tours, who gives a lively description of this sad history, states that there remained no trace of Lugdunum beyond the land on which it once stood. And thus, after six hundred years of a brilliant existence, this mighty city lay prostrate in gory ruin, in which it slumbered for the space of nearly four centuries, when, at the voice of St. Bertrand, it once more raised its head. There is no record of the names of its bishops from 586 to 788, and the residence of those who preceded St. Bertrand is not known. The Saracens passed the Pyrenees about the year 712, and for a short time planted the Crescent above the Cross. They remained in possession of the mountain regions for a considerable period after their defeat at Poitiers in 730. It was during this period that St. Aventin flourished.

At length the happy day arrived when old Lugdunum was destined to rise from its ashes. Eighteen bishops had occupied its episcopal chair, when Bertrand was chosen for its pastor. His virtues and abilities had become widely known, and the Holy Ghost, who directed his election, inspired him not to refuse the dignity. He was consecrated at Auch by the Archbishop Bernard de Montaut, whose cathedral was the metropolitan one of ten episcopal cities. The deputies who conducted their new bishop to Comminges described him as 'a man famous for every kind of good work, who did not owe his promotion either to presents or supplications, who was remarkable for his chastity, won-

derful for his humility, and eminent for the practice of all the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal.'

Bertrand commenced his episcopacy by restoring the walls of his cathedral; he built a close, in which he assembled his canons and subjected them to the rules of St. Augustin. The historian tells us of them, that 'they were truly religious, possessing nothing individually, taking their meals in common, wearing uniform habits, having the same hours for sleep, never going out without permission of the Superior; in one word, having but one spirit and one mind, as there is but one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.' In the words of the hymn:

> Audimur: rediit: flectet amor patrem;
> Pastorale tremens jam recipit pedem;
> Velat sacra comas insula: fit novi
> Bertrandus caput agminis.

The city of Comminges was completely destroyed, but the celebrity of Bertrand soon attracted new inhabitants; houses were quickly grouped around the church; as it had been formerly visited by the first Christian missionaries on account of its extent and importance, so did it now, in its destitution, owe its renovation to the residence of another apostle. So it was with many towns in those days of turbulence and warfare; like soldiers round their standard, the scattered people gathered themselves round their bishop, and found shelter under the banner of the Cross.

Bertrand ruled for nearly fifty years over the diocese of Comminges, and thus, during nearly half a century, directed the flock entrusted to him in the ways of God, instructing them, praying for them, edifying them by his example even more than by his preaching, and healing their diseases by his power of miracles. He was present in 1093 at the Council of Bordeaux, where he subscribed himself *Signum Bertrandi Convenensis episcopi.* In 1100 he assisted at the celebrated Council of Poitiers, when Philippe le Bel was excommunicated. This caused so

much commotion among the people, that they flung stones at the prelates while sitting in council; but these calmly took off their mitres, and, like the Roman senators before Brennus, remained unmoved upon their seats.

In 1119 he was present at the consecration of the cemetery of St. Mary of Auch. During this ceremony, the monks of St. Orens, who had been deprived of some of their privileges by the Pope, Calixtus II., stripped off their friars' garbs, attacked the church with arms, and endeavoured to set it on fire and kill the bishops. Pleasant traits of the times! In 1122, he was present at the consecration of a church dedicated to St. Orens, in the diocese of Toulouse.

He was engaged on a visitation of his diocese, when he was seized by a violent fever; and finding his strength fail, and foreseeing that his end approached, he caused himself to be carried to his cathedral. He desired to behold once more before he died that temple which had been rebuilt by his hands, and to bless that congregation which had grown up about him. His illness becoming serious, he directed his canons to place him before the altar of the blessed Virgin, the august patroness of his church, as he desired to pass the last moments of his life, and to breathe out his last sigh, at her feet. In tears and prayers he awaited the dread summons, and feebly giving his benediction to his mourning congregation, by whom he was surrounded, he surrendered his happy soul to its Creator on October 16, 1130. He was buried, according to his own express directions, at the foot of the altar of our Lady, where he had expired, and where his relics now repose; and 'rapidly the perfume of his virtues exhaling from his tomb proclaimed the glory of the sovereign King in the humility of his servant.'

Numerous miracles followed his death. Pope Alexander III., influenced by the solicitations of a nephew of St. Bertrand, who was Archbishop of Auch, as well as by the public desire, sent Vital, prothonotary of the Court of Rome, to Comminges, that he might institute an enquiry

among the contemporaries of Bertrand, and examine the facts upon the spot. When he had completed his enquiry, Vital communicated his report to the Pope, the college of cardinals, and the bishops, assembled in the church of the Lateran, and on the approbation of that venerable body, Alexander, sovereign Pontiff, solemnly pronounced him beatified. He was canonized by Clement V., and authorisation was given to expose his relics to public veneration. Devotion to St. Bertrand spread through all France, and has continued undiminished to this day, particularly in the former diocese of Comminges.

Many miracles are recorded, some of them performed during his life, and others after his death at his tomb. M. Agos mentions twenty-five, from which I extract a few. The reputed father of an illegitimate child denied its paternity, and refused to support it. The mother in her misery had recourse to the bishop, and implored him, by the authority which he derived from God, to oblige the father to support the child, who was perishing from hunger. The bishop sent for the man, reproved him and warned him not to be accessory to murder by his criminal neglect of the child, of whose existence he had been the author. The man stoutly repudiated the paternity, and characterised the demand as a fraud and calumny upon the part of the woman. Thereupon, Bertrand ordered a vessel of cold water to be brought, blessed it, and put a large stone into it, saying, 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, take that stone out of the water: if you are guilty, God will make it manifest.' The man plunged his hand into the water and brought out the stone; but his arm was scalded as if by boiling water. He immediately confessed his guilt, and acknowledged the child as his own, humbled and surprised by the miraculous manner in which his falsehood had been confounded.

There was warfare between the Counts of Comminges and Bigorre; and Sancius Parra of Olcia, who commanded the forces at Bigorre, ravaged the country of Comminges up to the wall of old Lugdunum. Bertrand,

witnessing the devastation which was committed, entreated Sancius to restore the cattle and other beasts necessary for the purpose of agriculture, which he had carried off; but he refused to do so unless he was paid their full value. The holy bishop redoubled his importunities, assured him that it was impossible for him at that time to pay a sou, but added emphatically, 'Restore them to me now, and I engage to repay you before you die.' Sancius relented, restored the cattle, and he and the bishop parted. Bertrand died some time afterwards, and Sancius Parra went to Spain to fight against the Moors. In one of these campaigns he was made prisoner, laden with chains, and cast into a dark dungeon, from which he, with several of his companions in arms, was to be transported into slavery in Africa. One night, as he was meditating upon his unhappy fate, the prison suddenly became illuminated by a brilliant light, and he heard a voice say to him:

'Sancius, arise and come.'

'Who are you, lord?' he asked, and the voice replied:

'I am Bishop Bertand, to whom you restored the cattle of his people, and I come to redeem my promise and repay you.'

Thereupon the chains of the captive were broken, as of themselves. They both went out of the prison, and at daylight he found himself on the mountain of Esquito,* near Olcia,† in the Val d'Aspe. Having arrived there, St. Bertrand enjoined him to visit annually with devotion the church at Comminges, where his body reposed; and, taking leave of him, disappeared. Sancius presented himself to his acquaintances in the neighbourhood, who immediately recognised him; and he related to them his miraculous deliverance from prison. They united with him in rendering thanks to God and glory to St. Bertrand; and he never failed to go to Comminges every year to renew his thanksgiving to his deliverer. This marvellous

* La pène d'Escot.

† Now Osse, of which mention is made in 'Our Lady of Sarrance.'

event is celebrated on May 2, under the title of the 'Apparition of St. Bertrand.'

Another similar instance, after his death also, is recorded. A man, who was his namesake, and who had the happiness to be his friend, was taken prisoner, bound with chains, and thrown into the bottom of a strong tower. He was kept so long in this dungeon that the vermin began to consume him. A prey to this horrible infliction, tormented by the most cruel hunger and thirst, unable to sleep either by night or by day, this miserable man invoked death, watering the tainted pavement of his dungeon with his tears. The clemency of our Lord was exhibited to the glorification of St. Bertrand by means of this poor prisoner. He was inspired in his wretchedness to have recourse to him who had honoured him with his friendship during life. He prayed to him with fervour, saying, 'O most charitable father, who now, as I believe, dost enjoy the glory of heaven, come to my relief, and deliver me from these animals that are devouring me.' He had no sooner uttered his prayer than the vermin disappeared, and he became clean. Then, full of confidence in him who had supernaturally befriended him, he redoubled his prayers and importunities, asking him to procure his delivery from captivity. During his prayer, he beheld the beatified bishop approach, break his fetters, and take him out of the tower, which is called Fort Castel. The captive, thus set at liberty, carried away his chain, and hung it up as an offering before the tomb of the saint, to the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A poor woman, whose name, we are told, was Mary, had been paralysed in all her limbs for many years. She used to go about in a little hand-cart and collect alms from the charitable. Full of confidence and contrition, she caused herself to be carried to the tomb of St. Bertrand, and fervently invoked the saint; he appeared to her, restored strength to her limbs, gave her a stick, and pointed out to her the road by which she could walk back. It some-

times happened that she mislaid the stick, and whenever this occurred she immediately lost the use of her limbs again. One day a wicked man stole the miraculous stick, and went off with it to Spain, where he exhibited it, and told its supernatural history, receiving large offerings from the faithful, which he applied to his own purposes. In the meantime Mary relapsed into her former helpless condition, and was carried daily before the tomb of the saint, where she wept and prayed, with unabated faith in his power and goodness. At last he took pity on her, and recompensing her perseverance, cured her completely, while the stick was unexpectedly restored to her. This happened in presence of many people, with whom the church was crowded at the time. She lived for several years afterwards, and was buried near the spot where the body of her benefactor reposes.

About two centuries after St. Bertrand's death, a native of the diocese of Comminges was elevated to the chair of St. Peter, under the name of Clement V. He visited the church of St. Bertrand, and having prostrated himself for some time in prayer before his relics, he took them from their resting-place, and deposited them in a superb shrine, or *châsse*, adorned with precious stones. They were exposed to the veneration of the faithful, borne in procession round the church and cloister, and placed in the chapel of our Lady, which thenceforward has been called the Chapel of St. Bertrand. The festival of the translation of the relics is kept on January 16.

During the religious wars of the sixteenth century St. Bertrand de Comminges attracted the cupidity of the Huguenots by the wealth of its church. Its inhabitants organised a small body of defenders, and with three hundred soldiers were able to hold out for seven months against their assailants, although the surrounding country had been laid bare by these ruthless bands. In 1577 the city was attacked by the Huguenots for the second time. While the canons were chanting matins in the cathedral, a woman, named Paterette, gave the enemy entrance to

the town through her house, which was situated on the ramparts. They set the church on fire, burned all the altar-pieces, even that over the tomb of the saint, and took away forty-six costly lamps that were kept burning before the different altars, one hundred and twenty chalices of great value, several crosses in silver and crystal, besides various other precious objects. Paterette, however, was captured and carried to Toulouse, where she was hung and her body burned, as a befitting reward for her treason.

In 1586, the ruthless captain Sus made himself master of the city by stratagem, but was driven out after a siege of forty-eight days by the mountaineers under the command of their bishop, Urbain de Saint-Gelais. Sus withdrew to the stronghold of Mauvezin, which dominated the abbey of Escale-Dieu. In 1593, the Huguenots set fire to the convent of the Franciscans (Cordeliers), at Valcabrère, and got possession of the city by escalade, ravaging it again with blood and ruin. It is recounted, among other inhuman deeds, that they seized upon the mother of the Sieur de Luscan, who was upwards of eighty years of age and bed-ridden, that they beat her unmercifully, and robbed her. These brutalities so excited the inhabitants, that, aided by large bands of adventurers or free-lances, they prepared for reprisals. We read in an old history of Bigorre that 'the people of Comminges, to the lowest, assembled, and in a whirlwind descended on the plains of Bigorre, and caused such disorder and pillage as had not been seen since the commencement of the war. Thus, after these depredations, the peasants of Bigorre abandoned the cultivation of their lands through want of cattle, and the greater part of them took the road to Spain.'

From this sad history it may well be understood that scarcely an old residence is to be seen in the town at the present day. In effect there are only two or three houses that may be called such—the episcopal residence, on which the arms of Comminges still flourish, 'l'écu à la croix patée,' and in the same street the house of Pierre

Bridaut. This latter is remarkable for the escutcheon, a bridle, with the name of P. Bridaut, and a man on foot, who is supposed to represent him. Several other houses present fragments of old sculpture, ancient windows, and door-frames.

The relics of St. Bertrand had been concealed and abstracted from the fury of the heretics during the civil wars. They were transported to Lectoure, in Gers, and were restored when the times became tranquil. The pastoral staff of the saint, commonly called *l'Alicorne*, had been preserved with great care, but was carried off during the invasion of 1593. The chapter naturally attached great value to its possession, and in 1601 petitioned the king to compel its restoration to them. This petition succeeded, and it was sent back to them by Adrian d'Aure, Viscount of Larboust, who declared that he had taken it solely from his desire to preserve it for the benefit of the church: 'l'avoir prise et retirée, désirant la conserver pour le profit de l'église, et affection qu'il a toujours eue en son cœur d'aimer l'église et tout ce qui en dépend, le clergé et habitants d'icelle, comme leur prie de croire qu'il désire demeurer leur bon voisin et ami . . . pour ces considérations et volontairement il est venu, et a porté ladite alicorne, laquelle il redonne présentement de sa dévotion et bonne volonté à Monsieur Saint-Bertrand en son église, au chapitre et au pays,' &c. How these sentiments do honour to the knightly barons of these elder days!

One of the painful incidents attaching to these chronicles is the necessity of recording the outrages perpetrated upon noble churches and venerable shrines during the religious wars, and still more during the French Revolution. St. Bertrand passed through the fiery furnace. The hour of desolation had come, its church was closed, and its clergy banished. They assembled to pray for the last time under its ancient roof, and men who had grown grey under the shadow of its sanctuary, children who had served at the altars of God, silent and

weeping, beheld the sacred bones, which had been the object of veneration to so many centuries, taken from their shrine, while all, priests, children, and people, kissed for the last time their honoured treasure. It must have been a moving sight in that sombre church, in the obscurity of the twilight, with the myrmidons of impiety almost at their gates, to have witnessed that farewell salutation of these beloved relics, for the security of which they were more anxious than for the safety of their own lives. Such moments are supreme moments in the life of an individual; they are supremest in the life of a nation! If God's mercy and the intercession of his saints did not interpose and stay the onward march of the Evil One—unchained from the abyss—terrible and irreparable would be the world's catastrophe. 'And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the old dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.'*

The church of St. Bertrand was once again despoiled of its wealth, but the sacred relics were saved. The *châsse*, or shrine, stripped of its silver ornaments, was secreted between the outer pillars, above the sacristy. It is said that a soldier, rendering himself conspicuous by his savage impiety, incurred the reproof of his captain, who was little disposed to repress ordinary blasphemy. A short time afterwards, being in action, the first cannon-shot that was fired carried away his arms and legs, when his companions recalled with a shudder the execrations with which he had outraged the name of St. Bertrand. Similar instances of visible and exemplary punishment for vaunting impiety are less rare in the history of men's lives than scoffers may be willing to credit.

During the fury of the Revolution the see of Comminges shared the general fate; thus the very name of the city was blotted out, and, in its stead, they called it Hauteville, which is thought to be a translation of Lugdunum, its

* Apocalypse xx. 1, 2.

former name under the Romans.* Nothing now remains of all those treasures, and ornaments, and costly vessels, with which the piety of many generations had endowed the Cathedral of Comminges. While the Revolution has been clever in destruction, it has never shown any ability in restoration, and, in place of the peace and contentment of the 'ages of faith,' it bequeathed a legacy of anarchy, distrust, and political contention. When, at a later period, permission was given to reconstruct the church, in order to discharge the first necessary expenses of divine worship, it was necessary to knock down the buildings which had sheltered the galleries of the cloister, and to sell the stone monuments of those who had expected to await the last great accounting day under the shadow of the cathedral. In the midst of ruins, this desolate basilica, deprived of its prelates and canons, sadly lifts its mourning head to heaven, preaching to us that all here below, the consecrated edifices of religion and the silent dwellings of the dead, has but a temporary duration, and that our hope and our love can have no stability, except in that temple which is not built by human hands.

The see of Comminges was rendered illustrious by the great prelates that occupied it at different periods. From the first bishop, who sealed his faith with his blood, under Evaric the Goth, to the last, Mgr. d'Osmond, who, in 1792, was driven from his flock to seek shelter in England, there were sixty-eight prelates. Many of them were canonised saints, many of them were distinguished as legislators, many of them celebrated for their learning, and all of them for their zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Living in times of civil war and trouble, some of them were obliged to put on their armour and draw the sword, placing themselves at the head of their people to resist the Goth and the Saracen. This state of society obliged St. Bertrand to fortify the town and the cathedral, that they might be secured from any *coup de*

* The Celtic word *lug* has the same signification as *loc* in patois, *lugar* in Spanish, and *lieu* in French, all of which mean place or site.

main on the part of an unexpected foe. He rebuilt the church on the spot where it now stands, and surrounded it with a strong wall, constructed upon the ruins of the old fortifications. Shortly before his time, the name of Lugdunum was changed for that of Comminges, and not long after its death, through respect for his memory, it got that of ST. BERTRAND DE COMMINGES.

The ancient diocese of Comminges contained 180,000 souls; it was divided into twenty-two archdeaneries, two of which were in the valley of Aran, in Spain; it had two hundred and thirty-one parishes, and one hundred and fifty-seven annexes, or chapels of ease. The bishop was Seigneur of Alan and several other districts;* he bore the title of Count of Comminges, an honour conferred upon the see by Clovis, and had a seat in the assembly of the states of Languedoc. He had jurisdiction over two churches dedicated to St. Bertrand, in the diocese of Balbastro and of Lerida, in Spain. The chapter of the cathedral consisted of six archdeacons, thirteen canons, and thirty-two prebendaries, besides numerous inferior officers. It possessed five collegiate churches, which had their canons, three abbeys of the Cistercian order, nine convents, and three hospitals. The abbey of Notre-Dame-de-Bonnefond, founded in 1136, was the most considerable. Its ruins at St. Gaudens still cover a large space of ground. It was the burial-place of the Counts of Comminges. The arch which covered their tombs has now been converted into the gateway of a stable. The episcopal revenue amounted to 70,000 livres, a considerable income in those days. The bishops of Comminges possessed a magnificent palace near Alan, in the Upper Garonne, which was their favourite summer residence. Its ruins still exist, and exhibit some beautiful remains of sculpture and architecture. It was at Alan also that was placed one of the most considerable hospitals of the diocese.

The chapter of the cathedral of St. Bertrand was remarkable for its care of the poor. It met weekly, and

* Saint-Frajou, Saint-Pé d'Ardet, Cazenove, Montdieu, &c.

there was not a single meeting during two centuries at which large sums were not allocated to the service of the indigent and infirm. Even at the period when the church was plundered of its sacred vessels and ornaments, and reduced almost to utter poverty by the Huguenots, the poor were not neglected; the chapter always endeavoured, even from their diminished means, to reserve their pittance, '*la pitance de poures.*' They did not pay less attention to the instruction of the people, and the old men who were educated before the Revolution possessed a thorough and perfect knowledge of the catechism and of ecclesiastical history. In consequence, the clergy of this diocese proved themselves, during the days of temptation and trial, generously firm in their attachment to the faith; without an exception, they preferred exile to apostasy, and there are touching instances related of the veneration and affection which their people preserved towards them. Most of them sought refuge on the frontier in Spain, and it was the care of their former flock constantly to seek them out and send them provisions and pecuniary assistance in their banishment.

The diocese had six establishments of Knights Hospitallers of St. John at Valcabrère, Loudervielle, Benquet, Estenos, Aspet, and L'Isle-en-Dodon. There were also sixteen priories of different orders; those at Saint-Béat, Sarrancolin, Valentine, Labarthe-Astusson, and Saint-Laurence were the principal. This latter was an offshoot of Bouloc, and belonged to the order of Fontevrault, founded in 1109. It was remarkable from the fact that the abbess was chief and superior-general of the entire order, male and female, in honour of the obedience which our Lord always practised towards his blessed Mother, and in which, after his death, He was imitated by St. John the Evangelist.

This diocese also abounded in holy sanctuaries, to which pilgrims came from all parts. These were generally dedicated to our Lady, and were associated with some pious legend or tradition, as the readers of these pages may bear

witness. Such were Polignan, Notre-Dame-de-Vallatens, *Bourisp*, Le Bout-du-Puy, Sainte-Marie, Saint-Bernard, *Saint-Savin*, Saint-Jean-de-Ponlat, Saint-Exupère, Saint-Gaudens, and *Saint-Aventin*, besides six in the Spanish valley of Aran, which lies at the base of the Entécade, as described in the account of Our Lady of Bourisp. I hope upon a future occasion to give a more detailed account of the sanctuaries of the diocese of Comminges, if time and opportunity shall prove favourable.

At the entrance of the suburb of St. Bertrand, on the banks of a rivulet, the bed of which is often dry, may be seen a large cross on a monolith pedestal in what appears to be the shape of a cone. It is said that one of the canons, as he was returning from Valcabrère, where he had passed the day in the confessional, lost his way in the darkness of a wintry night. He was sorely perplexed, and in his distress knelt down to invoke the aid of St. Bertrand. Suddenly he heard the tinkling of a bell, and following the sound, he found himself upon the right road. In gratitude he erected this cross, and placed it upon a pedestal, intended to have the shape of a bell, but which looks more like a fir-cone. An inscription, greatly defaced, is interpreted to commemorate this incident.

The ancient diocese of Comminges is now broken up, and has been parcelled out between the archdiocese of Toulouse and the dioceses of Tarbes and Urgel, on the borders of the republic of Andorre. The old cathedral is desolate; its stalls are empty, and its functions are performed by a curé and his vicaire. The latter discharges the sacristan's duty, shows the church and explains its history to the curious stranger. The town of St. Bertrand, which as Lugdunum was the centre of Rome's civilisation and refinement, which as Comminges was the seat of great religious and political influence, is now merely the chief town of a canton, presenting an aspect of isolation and poverty. I had walked from the high road, through the by-ways and over this once-peopled

plain, and as I clambered up the silent ascent to the town, and gazed upon its massive but mouldering walls, my mind overflowed with oppressive reflections upon the world's instability and all life's vanity, until above this wreck of greatness and over these crumbling walls I beheld in stately widowhood the lonely cathedral, and on its summit the triumphant cross. As I once somewhere wrote:

> And this I've learned, through all life's 'wildering throng,
> In Christian hope alone there's no decay:
> And while I bow before these ruins hoar,
> My spirit humbly craves to thank and to adore!

I entered the cathedral of Comminges with this sentiment in my mind. It was most solitary, no one came for a long space to interrupt my meditation, while I was at liberty to pour forth undisturbed my thanksgiving and my supplications at the tomb of the great saint and illustrious bishop. At length the vicaire, to whom I have alluded, arrived with the keys of the choir and cloister, and accompanied me on my examination of the church.

The façade and doorway of the great entrance offer considerable interest. The entrance door is under the tower: one ascends to it by fourteen grass-grown steps deeply worn by the tread of seven generations. This door is surmounted by an arched niche, pierced by a circular eye, in which there formerly stood a statue of the blessed Virgin, patroness of the church. In the arch or centre there is a head in relief, which is believed to be that of Jupiter; at the right are two sepulchral stones which are anterior to Christianity, and bear the inscriptions: 'D. M. PAULÆ MATRIS PRIMULA V—— PAULINUS' (To the manes of Paula, their mother, Primula V—— Paulinus) and 'D. M. ANDROSSII SALISIUS FIL. PIE PIISSIMI' (Salisius to the manes of his beloved son Androssii), and at their side is an inscription of the date of 1335. Over the door, which is divided into two openings, is placed a straight lintel, on which the twelve apostles are sculptured. The tympanum represents in relief the adoration of the Magi,

with angels flinging incense before the blessed Virgin and the infant Jesus. There is also a statue of a bishop giving his benediction; it is supposed to be that of St. Saturninus. There are several other sculptured figures, all of great antiquity.

The first impression upon entering the church is cold and depressing; the single nave is almost filled up by the large, heavy-looking choir, which occupies two-thirds of the church in the centre. The interior walls, having suffered at various epochs from revolutionary dilapidations, present a chilling appearance. A lofty *jubé* screens the choir and nave: although very imposing, I thought that it greatly diminished the effect of the building. On one of its columns there is an inscription which states that Mass was celebrated for the first time on the altar of the *jubé* by Mgr. de Mauleon, who had erected it at his own expense, on Christmas night, 1535.

There are no pillars in the interior, with the exception of two large piers which support the tower: this massive heaviness, with the beaded ornamentation of their base, indicates the Romanesque period as the epoch of their construction. The nave is terminated at the east end by an apse, with five chapels radiating from it; six other chapels open upon the nave. When all these chapels had altars, including those of the *jubé*, the parochial altar, the choir, the tomb of St. Bertrand, and the cloister, there were no less than eighteen altars. The roof is groined, and made of a soft sandy stone called *tufa*; it is a foot in thickness. Five bosses unite the ribs which support it; these were painted, and represent the gaping mouths of animals, into which the mouldings appear to enter.

The choir has sixty-six stalls, which are carved elaborately. They present a great variety of types and costumes, and many of them are beautiful in design and execution. The interior and partitions of the upper stalls are ornamented with flowers, fruits, leaves, arabesques, masks, and fantastical animals, all of the most perfect carving. On

the first stall is represented the blessed Virgin, holding the child Jesus, and taking some fruit in her left hand, with the inscription—

AVE . REGINA . CELORON .
AVE . DOMINA . ENGELO .

On the eighteenth stall, in front of the dean's seat, is represented, in inlaid work (*marqueterie*), an open book, on the two pages of which the following may be read:—

Jesus Toi me'	Ung Dieu
Pi ai Vaici	Un * * *
Diave jaxio	Une Foy
Sa : : Veian	Une Loy
Dominus A	Tout Bin
Tu doy Ka	De Dieu
Nobis Vaiss	Aman
Dieu I Soi	Jesu Maria

The nineteenth stall represents St. Bertrand, with his mitre and crosier, his right hand resting upon a book. Again, on the twenty-second stall, one of the miracles performed by him is carved: seated on a rock, he is blessing a walnut-tree, at foot of which a man is kneeling. There are the twelve Sibyls with their different symbols. This is a most curious series of carved work, and the study of it will amply repay the amateur. In truth, I believe that the choir of St. Bertrand of Comminges is not surpassed by any other in the world, whether in England or Germany, Belgium or Spain. It has the advantage of still occupying its own place. At Valladolid I saw, not long ago, the entire of an exquisitely carved choir, that had been taken from a despoiled convent, put aside in the lumber-room of a gloomy museum.

The sanctuary is separated from the choir by a railing supported by small columns. The altar is of red marble from Sarrancolin, in the Val d'Aure, and is in the shape of a tomb. The reredos, painted and gilded, is very handsome; it represents the life of our Lord and the blessed Virgin in a series of one hundred and fifteen

figures of very remarkable composition. Several bishops are interred at the foot of this altar. Behind it, and separated from it by a narrow passage, is the tomb of St. Bertrand. The relics of several saints were preserved in his tomb; many *ex-votos*, among them the chain that bound Sancius Parra, were hung up around it, and before it a large silver lamp burned perpetually.

The tomb of St. Bertrand was erected by the Cardinal Pierre de Foix, Bishop of Comminges, about 1420, and is an altar tomb. Four pilasters project from the angles, and are ornamented with the arms of the cardinal, and crowned with niches and crocketed pinnacles. The principal front, at the back of which the high altar stood before the choir was made, is now shut out from view by the passage which intervenes between the high altar and the tomb. For many years the body of the saint was kept in a large shrine surmounted by the figure of a bishop standing on clouds, the whole group being of solid silver. This was carried away at the time of the Revolution; the relics of the saint, as already described, having been removed and secreted by the canons before their departure.

In a niche, richly ornamented, over the tomb or altar, is now placed the large *châsse* of silver and ebony, in which the relics are kept. The head is enclosed in a silver bust, and some of the bones are in a reliquary shaped like an arm. An iron grating of delicate workmanship protects this niche, and underneath it is a picture representing St. Bertrand at the feet of the blessed Virgin. Above is his statue. Near this are two smaller niches, which contain relics of various saints. Above them is a panel of carved wood, which probably has been used as an altar. The three other fronts of the tomb are covered with pictures, in the style of those at St. Savin, representing the scenes and miracles of St. Bertrand's life. These paintings were placed there to repair the damage done by the Huguenots, who burned the statues of the twelve Apostles, by which the tomb formerly was surrounded. They were executed

in 1823, and are the work of M. Tahan. The following is inscribed upon a silver plate in the reliquary:—

ICI
REPOSE LE CORPS
DE SAINT BERTRAND,
ÉVÊQUE
DE COMMINGES.

Respect for these relics at all times has been great. It is said that at an early period, one of the incumbents took a tooth from the head of the saint, through devotion and a desire to possess some precious memorial of him. In punishment for his devout larceny, the chapter sentenced him to be flogged. Among the relics possessed by this church there is one that is said to be a tooth of St. Thomas of Canterbury.*

There is a metal chest in the sacristy, which for a long time contained sundry articles that had belonged to St. Bertrand. It is ornamented by several figures of knights, with the device, 'Per l'amor de Madona combat ab aquesta libra' ('For the love of my Lady I fight under this livery'). In the sacristy were preserved two mitres which had belonged to St. Bertrand, one costly, the other of white damask and without ornaments. Only one of these now remains. His pastoral ring of gold, containing a precious stone, is still there. The celebrated alicorne—that is, an ivory stick about three yards long, which is supposed to have been carved for the handle of his crosier, is still preserved. In popular belief it is supposed to be the horn of the unicorn, but most probably it is the tusk of the narwhal. It usually was carried in procession, immediately before the figure of St. Bertrand. There are still preserved a pair of his episcopal slippers, and a pair of his

* The church of St. Bertrand formerly possessed several bits of the true cross, a piece of the sacred winding-sheet, relics of St. John Baptist, St. Bartholomew, St. Andrew, St. Fabien, St. Roch, St. Catherine, St. Barbe, St. Euphemia, St. Sabine, Saints Cidrac, Misag, and Abdenago (the authenticity of which is certified by the writing and signature of the bishop, Barthélemy de Donadieu), St. Juliette and St. Ariaque, St. Christian, St. Fulgentius, St. Taurin, St. John Chrysostom, St. Sylvester, St. Blaise, St. Denis, and St. Alexis. There were also relics of St. Anne, St. Laurence, and St. Stephen; but these have been taken away. The greater part are still preserved in the small shrines, which are placed in the niches over the tomb of St. Bertrand.

gloves, of red silk, with the monogram of Christ worked in golden letters. There are also two copes, said to be the gift of Clement V., but which have suffered considerable injury, so much as to render it difficult to pronounce upon their authenticity.

There are no less than eleven side chapels. The most interesting of these is that called 'La Chapelle des Cardinaux,' or of the Translation of St. Bertrand. It is said to occupy the spot on which stood the chapel of Our Lady, whither St. Bertrand caused himself to be brought to die. He was buried, according to his own directions, in this chapel, at the foot of the altar of our Lady, whence his remains were translated, by the hands of Clement V., to their present resting-place, from which it is devoutly to be hoped no future onslaught of the infernal powers will disturb them.

The organ forms a curious feature in the interior of the church. It is placed in an angle, on the left of the door as one enters, and attracts at once attention by its great size. The life and labours of Hercules, in bas-relief, form the subject of its ornamentation. A short time previous to the Revolution, the chapter expended one hundred thousand francs in fitting it with pipes of Cornish tin, but it was gutted in 1798, and all this material carried off and converted into bullets, or devoted to some purpose little consonant with its original harmonious destination. The pulpit is close to the organ, and looks as if it formed 'part and parcel' of it. A good arrangement for those religious exercises where preaching is alternated by music and *vice versâ*.

On the wall at the right hand side, opposite the organ, is suspended by two iron chains the huge body of a crocodile; its sharp teeth seem still whetting themselves in its yawning jaws. It is boasted to be a palpable and enduring testimony to one of St. Bertrand's great miracles. The story is as follows:—In the valley of Abat d'Embon, a crocodile had concealed itself in the thickest covers of its thickest forests. It used to imitate the plaintive moaning

of an infant, and when people were drawn to the spot by curiosity or compassion, it took the opportunity of devouring them. Many parties were organised, and many efforts made to destroy it, but none of those who made the attempt ever returned. St. Bertrand, moved by the terror of his people, determined himself to encounter the ferocious beast, but the only weapons that he took with him were his pastoral staff—the alicorne—and his personal holiness. When the monster saw him approach, it opened its mouth to swallow him, but the saint, touching it with his staff, spread the end of his stole on its head, and it followed him like a lapdog, until they arrived in front of the cathedral, where it rolled out its tongue and died upon the steps.

Those who do not accept this miraculous story, and there are some such, attribute the presence of the dead crocodile in the cathedral to some knight of Comminges who served in the Crusades, and, returning from Palestine, brought it as a trophy of his exploits, and had it hung up in his native church as an *ex-voto* for his rescue from danger and death. It is strange that it should have retained its place on the wall through all the devastations of the Huguenots and the Revolution. What deeds has it not looked down upon within those walls, and what a valuable historian would it not be if animation could now be given to that once fiery tongue!

The pavement of the church is formed of stones clumsily assorted, and which, to a large extent, are tombstones. In front of the chapel of St. Roch there is a fragment composed of squares of white and black marble, arranged like a chess-board. It probably is a part of the old pavement, that which now exists not being very ancient.

On the left hand side of the chapel of the blessed Sacrament there is a small door which leads to the cloister, now almost an utter ruin. Nevertheless, it is of great beauty, and a most interesting fragment. It is placed at the southern side of the church, and forms a parallelogram, three sides of which are covered by an arched roof, resting

upon the capitals of twin pillars; the fourth side is groined and supported by elliptical arches, crossing each other on five bosses, which bear the arms of France, De l'Isle, and Mauleon, with the head of a bishop wearing a very low mitre, and another head that is mutilated, with the inscription SE. BTRD. At this side also there are seven tombs, where lie buried several canons and prebendaries of the cathedral. Near this cloister was a rare and valuable library, the books of which were sold by weight at the Revolution. Even the tombs which occupied the cloister were violated and sold, with the exception of seven. It is very sad to stand in such a ruin and gaze upon the destruction with which infuriated men can obliterate the holiest sanctuary, and desecrate the most sacred asylum, not excepting that of death itself.

It is pretended by some that the cathedral of Comminges stands upon the site of a temple of Abellion or of Jupiter; but no traces exist to justify this supposition. Tradition assures us that St. Saturninus, who was the first to preach the Gospel there, consecrated an oratory to the blessed Virgin; but we have no accurate account of any church, either before or after the destruction of the city by the Burgundians in 586, until the time of St. Bertrand. It was he that first occupied himself with the reconstruction of the church. About this church there grew up a small town, and after his death it became the object of pilgrimage to the people of the county. As the numbers of these pilgrims increased, it became necessary to enlarge the church, which was undertaken in 1304, in memory of his great predecessor, by Bishop Bertrand de Gouth. This superseded the smaller basilica which St. Bertrand had built, of which nothing now remains except the entrance door, the two buttresses that support the tower inside, and the walls as far as the chapels of Our Lady and St. Margaret. These walls are pierced by small windows, and ornamented by a circular headed arcade, resting on figures like corbels. The choir which St. Bertrand erected in the centre of the church was altered at the time of the repairs

made by order of Clement V., and was finished by the Bishop Jean de Mauleon about the year 1520.

The church was finished under the episcopacy of Hugues de Castellione, about 1350, as appears by the epitaph on his tomb in the chapel of Our Lady. A century later, Cardinal Pierre de Foix constructed the tomb of St. Bertrand about the year 1425; and between 1520 and 1550, Monseigneur Mauleon altered the interior character of the church by erecting the rood-screen or *jubé*, and constructing the choir, high altar, organ, and chapels of the blessed Virgin and St. Margaret, together with the arched gallery over the tombs in the cloister, such as they exist at the present day.

Thus, by these frequent alterations and additions, it has been rendered impossible to preserve that unity of character which is so much sought by architects and archæologists. It is to be regretted that some portions of the edifice do not sufficiently correspond with others, as the general effect has been thereby injured. On the other hand, an opportunity is afforded of examining in the same structure the characteristics of different epochs and styles, from the simple and majestic Romanesque to the florid and ornate Renaissance of the sixteenth century, when a false taste contributed to extinguish that sublime expansion of sentiment which had created the national glories of the Gothic or pointed period.

Three great festivals are celebrated annually at St. Bertrand de Comminges: that of January 16, which is the anniversary of the translation of the relics by Clement V. from the chapel of Our Lady to their present tomb; that of May 2, which is the anniversary of his apparition to Sancius Parra; and that of October 16, which is the anniversary of his death. All these festivals still are solemnised with great pomp and devotion; and crowds of pilgrims flock from all quarters to pray at the saint's tomb. Clement V. granted a jubilee in memory of the apparition of St. Bertrand and the Passion of our Lord, which is known among the people as 'le grand

Pardon,' to be celebrated in the Cathedral of Comminges upon any year in which the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross should fall upon a Friday. Pius VI. confirmed this favour, and Gregory XVI. extended its privilege. The last jubilee was held in 1850. More than fifty thousand pilgrims visited St. Bertrand on that occasion; eighty confessors were engaged continually in the confessionals, and the number of communicants was not less than the number of pilgrims.

In my notice of Poëylahun, I have made mention of the tribute of butter which the inhabitants of the valley of Azun had engaged to give to the Cathedral of Comminges, in atonement for an insult offered to St. Bertrand while preaching in their country. This story is told by M. Agos in his useful and very Catholic work.* A canon and two prebendaries were sent yearly to Arrens, carrying with them water that had been blessed by the prior of the chapel of St. Bertrand, and which had been filtered through the handle of his crosier. After Mass on Pentecost-day, they received the tribute of butter, giving back to each one a small portion of his offering; distributing to them some of the blessed water, which they esteemed to be a protection for their cattle against all diseases, and a few pieces of the money offered at the tomb of the saint. The deputies then went in procession round the house in which St. Bertrand received the insult, while its owner stood on the threshold and invited them to partake of some refreshment, which they accepted as a token of reconciliation and pardon. This house is still standing, and the memory of St. Bertrand continues to be venerated throughout the Val d'Azun; but the tribute of butter has been discontinued since the Revolution.

At the foot of the hill on which St. Bertrand de Comminges stands is the village of Valcabrère, near which, in the middle of the fields, may be seen the ancient basilica of St. Just, dating from the Carlovingian period. It possesses

* *Vie et Miracles de saint Bertrand*, p. 200. Par Louis de Fiancette d'Agos. St.-Gaudens, 1854.

much archæological wealth, and has been considered worthy of an especial 'Étude' by the Baron d'Agos.* I was much disappointed at not being able to see its interior. When I passed, the ancient crazy door was locked, the sun was blazing with intense heat, my mind was still dazzled with the recollections of St. Bertrand, and the sacristan lived too far off to allow me to send for him.

On each side of the tomb where repose the relics of St. Bertrand is placed on an altar card the antiphon, which formerly was sung before it daily after matins, while all the bells were rung that the faithful might unite in the prayer. And with this antiphon and prayer I conclude this notice, joining humbly in its spirit and sentiment.

ANTIPHONA SANCTI BERTRANDI.

Sanctus Bertrandus, clemens, dulcisque benignus,
Prudens et justus, fortis, mitisque modestus,
Solvat vincla reis et reddat lumina cæcis,
Infirmos sanet, cunctisque petita ministret.
Prudens et justus, fortis, mitisque modestus.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.
Prudens et justus, fortis, mitisque modestus.

Holy Saint Bertrand, clement, sweet, benign,
Justice, prudence, modesty are thine;
Unloose the chains of sin, restore the blind,
The sick ones heal, to all our prayers be kind;
Prudent and just and brave and meek.
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost we seek.
Glory for ever to the Three who save,
Prudent and just, modest and meek and brave.

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* *Étude sur la basilique de Saint-Just et les antiquités de Valcabrère.*

PRAYER TO ST. BERTRAND.

Oremus.

Deus, qui solus es bonus, et sine quo nullus est bonus vel sanctus, meritis et intercessione sancti Bertrandi, confessoris tui atque pontificis, jube nos tales fieri qui non debeamus tuâ bonitate privari, per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Let us pray.

O God! who alone art good, and without whom no one is good or holy, through the merits and intercession of St. Bertrand, your confessor and bishop, grant that we may become such as never to deserve to be deprived of your grace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

(LANDES.)

'C'est ici que Vincent de Paul a passé ses premiers jours. Cet arbre a vu couler ses jeunes années ; il a recueilli ses confidences naïves ; il a entendu ses ardentes prières ; peut-être fut-il témoin des révélations et des promesses divines. Peut-être ce jeune prêtre, agenouillé à son ombre, vit-il lui apparaître cette innombrable famille qui devait éterniser son nom. Enfants du patriarche de l'héroïsme, c'est donc ici votre vallée de Hébron ; ce chêne est pour vous le chêne de Mambré ! Quel charme de fouler ce sol, de respirer cet air, de s'asseoir à cette ombre ! quel charme de se reporter aux anciens jours, et de raviver les scènes d'autrefois en se retrouvant sur le même théâtre !'—*La Couronne de Notre-Dame de Buglose*, p. 193.

WE have now bidden farewell to the Pyrenees, and said our last prayer at the tomb of St. Bertrand, and with consoled hearts but unwilling feet we turn our eyes from these glorious mountains and delicious valleys towards the dark pine-trees of the gloomy Landes. Having exulted for so long a period in the annals of heroic days, it is fitting that we should rejoice in that providence of God which has not left our later times without great examples of faith and charity. Therefore I grasp my pilgrim staff once more with courage, and bend my steps to the birthplace of St. Vincent of Paul. The scenery now changes completely ; and as we are about to enter upon that large and extraordinary region of France known as the Landes, I will preface this portion of my work by a brief description of its nature and character. Dr. Ozanam, the brother of Frederick Ozanam, that accomplished and amiable writer and intimate friend of Lacordaire, published a detailed account of the Landes in a number of the 'Correspondant' for 1858, which has been partially

transferred by a clever pen to the 'Month' for August 1867. Both of these writers apparently are indebted to the work of M. du Miège, and I shall trespass on the labours of all three for the advantage of my readers.

If Russia has its steppes and America its pampas, not far from the lovely country of Béarn and Bigorre, France has its desert in the solitary region of the Landes. The Landes present to the eye of the traveller plains boundless as the horizon of the sea, in a country that is desolate beyond all other in cultivated Europe. However often one may traverse those vast solitudes, the mind never becomes accustomed to them; the same impression of loneliness always recurs. The few habitations, scattered at a distance of several miles from each other, serve to show more distinctly the immensity of the wilderness on which they have been dropped. At long intervals an occasional pine forest is seen; like an island of verdure in an ocean of sand, it gives some repose to the eye, while it evinces the energy of man which can transform the desert and render barrenness productive. Everything in this region differs from other places, and this naturally gives to it peculiar interest. The soil is not earth, it is the crystal of the rock ground to powder. The sea throws up incessantly waves of sand which roll off into the waste, and the traveller who thinks he is on *terra firma* is walking upon water, over which the dust of centuries has formed a thick crust; but if imprudently he ventures too far, on a sudden he will find himself sink, and is lost in the treacherous quagmire. This desolate district occupies more than a third of the whole western coast of France.

The most characteristic class of its inhabitants is that which lives by extracting turpentine from the pines, and the shepherds who watch the flocks that browse upon the scanty herbage which springs up around the marshes and even upon the sand. The shepherd walks upon stilts, moving between heaven and earth as if he did not belong to either; indeed, the greater part of the population, of

all ages, sexes, and occupations do the same, and so are saved from the trouble of plodding over the sinking sand or floundering in the concealed bog. The shepherds have a long balancing-stick to aid them, and this they manage to fix so as to form a sort of tripod with their stilts, and thus are enabled to sit and rest in mid-air. They can shuffle along as fast as a horse can trot, and before the railway was made they used to carry the mail at the rate of three leagues an hour.

The origin of the word *Lande* is supposed to be derived from the German *Land*, which in that language signifies a rich cultivated country, but, by a species of irony, has been made in French to designate the poorest and most sterile district. The Landes are constituted by a long zone of sand, which extends from the Gironde to the Adour, from the Point de Grave to the frontier of Spain. Its length is about sixty and its breadth about twenty leagues. The highest point is said not to be raised more than eighty mètres above the sea level; but there is a continuous elevation, or backbone, which turns the waters on one side towards the Bay of Biscay, and on the other towards the Mediterranean. The sand is cast up by the sea at a rate, as it was calculated in the last century, of a million and a quarter of cubic mètres every year. Brémontier, whose name will be for ever connected with the process of reclaiming this desolate tract, calculated that the *dunes* advance on the land at the rate of about twenty yards a year. Taking this as his basis, and measuring their extent, he found that they had been in motion for rather more than four thousand years. By calculating forwards, the startling conclusion has been obtained, that unless the sand is checked, it will reach Bordeaux in two thousand years. Or, if the world lasts sufficiently long, it may fill up the English Channel, and, as the writer in the 'Month' pleasantly observes, 'render useless the submarine railway between Dover and Calais.' Nothing can show more strongly the power of God and the capacity of man to comprehend his works than this calculation.

While the course of the sun is scarcely sufficient to mark the brief passage of the hours, a grain of sand, cast up by the sea and borne along by the wind, indicates the march of centuries and affirms the world's age. It is thus that science every day becomes more and more a brilliant witness to the truth of the Mosaic account.

In several places pine-trees are to be seen with their top branches above the sand, while their trunks reach sixty or eighty feet beneath it. At Mimézan a *dune* has swallowed up the church altogether. This place was once a port; it is now three or four miles from the sea. Other ports along the coast have disappeared altogether. In the fourteenth century the *dunes* turned the course of the Adour itself northwards for about twenty miles, and the port at its new mouth, Vieux Boucau, was of some note during four hundred years. In the seventeenth century, Gaston de Foix cleared out the ancient mouth, to which the river returned.

When the Moors were expelled from Spain, in 1610, they proposed to colonise the Landes: their numbers amounted nearly to a million. The French government, however, required as a condition of their naturalisation that they should embrace the Christian religion, which they refused, and returned to Africa. It is probable that, if their offer had been accepted, they would have 'made the desert smile,' as they had shown in Spain great proficiency in the art of agriculture. However, such was not the destiny of the Landes. 'Many writers,' observes Dr. Ozanam, 'have applauded the fidelity of the Moors in refusing to apostatise, and blamed the French for making such a condition, as if it would not be an act of apostasy upon the part of the rulers if they introduced among a Christian people the impostures of a false creed, and exposed the ignorant to the influence of its corruption.'

In 1776, two brothers, one of them a priest, Matthieu and Guillaume Desbiez, conceived the idea that the *dunes* could be reclaimed. A few years later, Brémontier, an engineer, found out that the maritime pine might be made

to grow in the sand, and he began the experiment as far as his means allowed him. This pine seems in olden times to have flourished on these shores; its roots stretch themselves in such a way as to grasp whatever support is to be found in the soil; they are, moreover, furnished with a resinous juice, which prevents them from being injured by water. But the Revolution and other troubles interposed, and men gave little thought to the *dunes* or the *bruyères*; while old Ocean silently but resolutely continued his own work. The reclamation of the Landes was once more taken in hand in 1838, under Louis-Philippe, and since that time a good deal of money has been spent, with corresponding success. The Emperor lately bought an estate for the purpose of planting; his example has been followed by several large proprietors. There can be no doubt that if the whole of the *dunes* along the coast could be clothed with forests of pine, the Landes would be easily reclaimed for cultivation.

The inhabitants form several tribes, which are known by different names. They are called *bergers*, *marensins*, *cauziotes*, and *parents*. The latter designation is applied to them principally at Bordeaux. They form a population apart, whose manners, character, and appearance differ from those of all the surrounding people. They are divided into four classes, as well as into different tribes: *le citadin*, he who inhabits the towns; *le marin*, the sailor, who lives near the coast; *le résinier*, he who cultivates the turpentine; and *le bèrger*, or shepherd.

The shepherd of the Landes is singularly attached to his birth-place. His life is passed in an isolated habitation, which looks, in the middle of the waste, like a solitary ship on the wide ocean. He goes out at early morning with his flock; the entire day is spent by him exposed to the burning sun; and, when he returns at evening, his food is wretched. It consists of *cruchade*, which is a soup made of maize, salt, and water; or of *taurin*, which is another kind of soup, made of onions, lard, and vinegar, to which is added the *mousset* or fried bacon, or sardines.

His beverage is the stagnant water of the marsh. With such nourishment, it is not surprising that the race should be pale, miserable, and stunted. Their wretched dwellings are generally surrounded by the marsh and sheltered by the dung-pit, which, as in Ireland of former days, stands close to their door. But, notwithstanding all, the shepherd of the Landes dearly loves his native skies, and looks upon the sand and the *dunes* as the most beautiful country in the world. The costume of the shepherd consists of the ancient *béret*, or cap, and of the *cuculle*, or garment of sheepskin, the wool of which is turned out, unlike that of the celebrated 'Brian O'Lynn.' The women wear large hats, felt or straw, according to the season, trimmed with black ribbands, which they call *pullide*. At the sea-side they ornament their hats with marine *immortelles*.

Their customs are curious in many particulars, but more especially as regards the two great events of marriage and death. When a young man desires to marry, he goes, in the middle of the night, accompanied by his friends, to the house of the girl whom he has selected; he knocks at the door, the master and mistress of the house get up, welcome him, and lay the table-cloth. The night is passed in eating and drinking, and talking upon every subject except that of his visit, which, however, is well understood. But when the day begins to dawn the young lady withdraws for a time, and returns, bringing with her a plate of fruit. If among the fruit there are nuts, it signifies that the suit is rejected; the suitor is dismissed without hope, and thenceforth is distinguished among his companions as *le galant à la noix*. If, on the other hand, the fatal fruit is absent, he becomes the accepted lover, and they are affianced. A custom somewhat similar existed among the ancient Gauls.

Funerals are conducted with much solemnity; the women attend, and cover their heads, shoulders, and feet with a long black veil. All the relations accompany the body to the church, but none of them follow it to the cemetery; that is left to the undertakers, and they them-

selves return to their homes and retire to bed as a sign of the depth of their grief. During the entire year that follows the death of a parent, the household utensils are turned upside down, and the kitchen crockery and pots are covered with black; at the end of the year ('au cap de l'an') they keep the anniversary with tears and lamentations. I remember to have witnessed at Cambo, in the Basque country, the funeral of an aged priest, who had been brought from his own parish to be interred in the ancestral cemetery. All the world over, there can be no more lovely churchyard than that of Cambo in the spring time and all the livelong summer. The graves are planted with roses, daffodils, and azaleas, whose bloom and brilliancy make even the acre of death a garden of sweetness. The old priest had many relations in the town, and they all were collected in the church in deep mourning while the funeral service was being read, but none of them accompanied the body to the grave. It was unceremoniously carried thither by the undertaker's men, and no one of kith or kin stood by while it was lowered into its 'narrow house.' Far different is the respect paid to the remains of the dead in Ireland, where the friends and kindred do not turn away from the departed one until they have seen it consigned to its long home, and the grave finally closed over it.

The cultivation of the pine and the production of turpentine form the chief industry of the Landes. It takes twenty years' growth before the pine can produce turpentine; and, if a vigorous tree and good returns are desired, thirty years are necessary. The turpentine (*résine*) is nothing else than the juice of the pine-tree. The trees are tapped, and then it flows in liquid, but quickly thickens under the action of the air, and becomes a white concrete substance in small lumps. It requires fifteen or twenty days to fill the pots that are placed at the foot to receive it. When one passes for the first time through a pine forest, it is most curious to see these little pots at the base of the trees, which are gashed and trickling imper-

ceptibly their life-blood into them. The man in charge, called *le gommier*, collects these pots from tree to tree with a little iron shovel, and pours their contents into a basket, called in patois *escouarte*. A hogshead (*barrique*), or from three hundred to three hundred and fifty pounds, may be gathered in a day, but that quantity would be the produce of five or six trees. There is another description of turpentine, which is called *burrus*. This is never liquid, but issues solid from the tree, and is gathered once a year. It is less rich and less valued than the other. If an average be taken, two hundred turpentine-trees produce a profit of about fifty francs.

These forests are exposed to a catastrophe which is capable of destoying a fortune in a day; that is, a conflagration among the *pignades*. A small spark is sufficient to set on fire trees, the leaves and cones of which are dried up by the scorching sun and their timber full of turpentine, rendering them especially combustible. Such fires resemble the mighty conflagrations of the virgin forests of America. Each tree seems to form a blazing pyramid; and when the wind is high it is impossible to check it, so long as a stick survives to feed its fury. Dr. Ozanam gives a very elaborate account of the culture of the pine and the process of tapping it, for which I must refer my readers to his interesting paper.

It appears that wherever the ground can be got for cultivation, Indian corn succeeds very well; and the fact that this is almost uniformly the food of the peasants seems to render certain diseases prevalent among them. They are subject to a noxious skin disease, called *la pellagre*, which first appeared in 1828. It shows itself in the shape of a bright red spot on the back of the hand, resembling erysipelas. The skin becomes dry and cracky, until it gradually scales off, the red spot still remaining. The general health is good, and when autumn arrives the infection seems to disappear. The diseased person fancies he is cured, but death has marked him for its own. The bright red spot returns with the spring for the second

time, and again on the succeeding year for the third time, when the brain becomes affected. The patient complains of vertigo, has fits of profound melancholy, which terminate in complete insanity, that is called *la folie pélagreuse.* The patient grows progressively weak, loses flesh, gets convulsions, and dies wretchedly. Sometimes, under the influence of a delirium which paralyses his energies, he commits suicide to end his unendurable sufferings. The cause of this fearful malady is attributed to the exclusive use of Indian corn, which has been rendered unwholesome by certain alterations produced in its quality, when grown upon a soil, like that of the Landes, not quite congenial to it. It is thought that this disease can be eradicated only by the drainage and reclamation of the land, enabling them to cultivate rice, barley, and wheat, which will permit the inhabitants to substitute the use of bread for that of the *cruchade,* and allow them to vary their consumption of maize by other necessaries. It is hoped also that the facility of transport of provisions afforded by the railway will tend to its eradication.

Labouheyre is one of the most considerable towns of the Landes district, and lies on the line of railroad from Bordeaux to Bayonne. It has two large fairs in the year, which are remarkable for the sale of old clothes. The Landais peasant has a strange taste for equipping himself in the red pantaloon and smart tunic of the soldier, and finds a large supply to suit his fancy at these fairs, which last for a period of eight days.

There is now before me, in a French manuscript, an account of an incident which befell a friend of mine in the Landes. He writes:—'I remember to have visited the Landes in my boyhood, when I witnessed a spectacle which has never been effaced from my memory. It happened that one day a terrific tempest set the *dunes* in motion, and they seemed to dance to the fearful music of the winds and the storm. At one time mountains of sand rose up before me, while behind me they seemed to sink down and disappear. It had the effect of an infernal

quadrille ("ballet infernal"), in which the sand-hills, seized with madness, performed the figures. One would have said that Orpheus had set the pine-trees in motion, but certainly not to the harmonious sounds of his gentle lyre. The moon was shining over this fantastic scene, when a good old woman said to me, "See, the hour of sorcery has come; it is their grand racket. Witches abound in this country, and one of them would think nothing of whipping you off to the devil on the handle of her broom-stick" ("Prenez garde, voici vient l'heure du sabbat. Les sorcières abondent dans la contrée, et quelque-une pourrait bien vous emporter au diable sur son manche à bala").

'While I was running about in every direction to examine a state of things so new and extraordinary to me, I stepped suddenly into a quagmire, treacherously covered over by the sand, into which I fell, and began to sink. I uttered a cry of distress, when a kind peasant, who heard me, quickly came towards me on his stilts, crying out from a distance, "Don't stir, or you are a dead man!" ("Ne bougez pas, ou vous êtes mort"). I then ceased to make the slightest movement, which, I comprehended inevitably would cause me to perish. While I remained thus motionless, I felt the sand insensibly strengthen under my feet, and I was taken out without having suffered any injury.'

The Landes have their legends and sanctuaries as well as the mountains and the valleys; and having thus described the country through which the pilgrim must travel, we proceed on our road. It was on one of those hot days, with a sharp wind, in the month of February 1868, which at that season are so common and so cheery in the south-west of France, that I embarked at the quay of Bayonne in a small uncomfortable steamer, bound for the town of Dax, in the Landes. I was accompanied by a dear old friend, whose profound piety, genial cheerfulness, and pleasant conversation, have rendered so many pilgrimages made together in many lands doubly agreeable and profitable.

Although we are now separated by great distance and by different duties, he will accept this tribute, which I offer to a friendship that has never changed, and a companionship that has never wearied. Our object on this occasion was a visit to the birth-place, or, as it is affectionately termed, 'the cradle' ('le berceau') of St. Vincent of Paul, and a pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Our Lady of Buglose.

Although the season was still that of winter, and there was not a leaf upon the trees, the scenery on both sides of the Adour was very pleasing. The river itself is broad and deep, with a fine roll of water, and its banks are studded with villages and occasional villas, which give them a warm and agreeable appearance. Its trade has been much diminished since the establishment of the railroad, which for some distance runs along its banks. Consequently, we met but few boats to enliven the scene; and in something less than six hours we landed near the bridge at Dax. The journey is performed by the train in little more than an hour.

Dax is a considerable town, pleasantly situated on the Adour: it traces its antiquity back to the times of the Romans. It was the capital of the Tarbelli when Cæsar conquered Gaul, and even at that time was celebrated for its mineral waters, from which it got the name of *Aquæ*, which subsequently became corrupted to *Acq* or *Dacq*, and thence to Dax. It was held by the English for some time under Edward III., and in 1571 it successfully resisted an attack of the Huguenots. It still is famous for its hot springs, which occupy a space surrounded by a high wall in the centre of the town, and spread a thick warm vapour around the square, in the middle of which they boil and bubble. There are mud baths outside the town which are famous for their efficacy in cases of rheumatism, and are frequented principally during the spring. As I roamed through its streets I little thought under what circumstances of dismay I should drive through them some months later, but which it boots not here to tell.

For me and my companion the chief attraction in Dax was its vicinity to the 'Berceau' of St. Vincent of Paul, and it was with no ordinary pleasure that we read, as the name of the principal street, *Rue de St.-Vincent de Paul.* One likes to read on the door-posts, on the wayside stones, on the angles of streets, and in their baptismal names, the evidence of the faith and veneration of a Catholic people.

The road from Dax to Pouëy, where St. Vincent was born, lies through a fertile and well-cultivated country, showing what industry may effect even in the Landes. It was late in the evening when, by the light of a brilliant moon, we drove up to the handsome church which has been erected on the spot on which stood the house in which the great saint was born. We were most cordially received by the amiable and accomplished Superior of the Lazarists, Father E. Lacour; although he had only just returned from a journey, he devoted himself to our entertainment, accompanied us over the establishment, and urged us to accept hospitality for the night.

I need not confide to my readers the sentiments with which I visited this interesting spot; nor need I encumber them with much of the history of the times nor of the life of this eminent saint; those are things with which all Catholics are familiar. It was towards the close of the sixteenth century, on Easter Tuesday, 1576, while France was agitated by many cruel trials, and when a portion of the nation, corrupted by the heresies of Luther and Calvin, had broken into rebellion against its sovereign, that St. Vincent was sent by the providence of God to heal strife and preach charity. France, which for so long a period had been one of the most flourishing monarchies of the world, had become, through the double scourge of civil war and heresy, the bloody theatre of violent and afflicting tragedies. Throughout the land churches were destroyed, altars overthrown, sacred things profaned, ministers of religion massacred, and, worse than all, ecclesiastical discipline was almost entirely dissolved, so

that in many provinces the flocks were without spiritual instruction, without the sacraments, in a word, without any of the external helps to salvation.*

In this universal confusion of holy things it is deplorable to learn that the zeal of the clergy did not prove itself equal to the crisis. The catechism was no longer taught, and the schools were shut so far as the inculcation of religious teaching was concerned. The village curés for the most part were like those shepherds of whom the prophet speaks; they limited their labour to shearing the wool and drawing the milk of their flock, and took no trouble about the spiritual nourishment of their souls. To such an extent was this neglect carried, that it was not uncommon to find nominal Christians who passed their entire lives without having acquired the knowledge of the existence of God; and as to the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, the explicit belief in which is necessary to salvation, these were matters on which the people generally were altogether ignorant. Still less were they instructed upon the sacraments and the dispositions with which they should be received. In recounting this lamentable state of religion at that period, the Bishop of Rhodez charitably adds: 'It is known to God alone what was the state of men's consciences in this profound ignorance of the things that concerned their salvation, or what may have been their faith; for they had no one who would teach them that which they were bound to believe.' 'So secularised had the clergy become,' writes Mr. Bedford, in the preface to his 'Life of St. Vincent of Paul,' 'that in a Catholic country, where no excuse could be offered for such neglect of propriety, few wore any distinctive dress; they went about with moustaches and boots, like mere men of the world; nay, it would appear in some instances, they did not take the trouble to put on their ecclesiastical attire even when performing some of the sacred offices of their calling. Thus it is related in the life of M. Bourdoise, who on principle always appeared in his cassock,

* *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, p. 14. Par M. Abelly.

that, going one day into the abbey church of St. Denis, he saw a man seated in the sacristy with a coat and short cloak on, and booted and spurred, who was hearing the confession of a priest vested in alb and stole. He immediately went in search of the prior, and said to him, "My father, come here; come and see a cavalier confessing a priest!" This caustic rebuke had its effect, for the prior instantly gave peremptory orders to the sacristan to allow no such scandals for the future. What wonder if the people were ignorant and immoral when their teachers and guides had so little sense of decency or responsibility! A good prelate told Vincent one day that he was labouring to the best of his ability, with the assistance of his grand-vicars, for the improvement of his diocese, but with only poor success, on account of the great numbers of his clergy who were both ignorant and vicious, and on whom neither counsel nor example seemed to have any effect. "I tremble," he said, "when I think that my own diocese abounds in priests who are addicted to intemperance or who live incontinently, but who nevertheless approach the altar every day, although they are thus devoid of all vocation to the ecclesiastical state." Another bishop, writing to him, thus expressed himself: "With the exception of the canon theologian of my church, I do not know a single priest among all in my diocese who is competent to undertake any ecclesiastical charge. Judge, then, how great is our need of labourers." '*

Such was the condition of the Church of France when God in his mercy raised up his faithful servant Vincent of Paul, who, animated by his Spirit and fortified by his grace, devoted himself with indefatigable zeal to apply the remedies required to repair such a state of things. In the village of Pouëy, near Acqs, as it was then called, in Gascony, there lived in the latter part of the sixteenth century a poor villager named John de Paul, who struggled hard to support his wife and six children upon the produce

* *Life of St. Vincent of Paul*, preface, p. vii. By Henry Bedford, M.A. 1856.

of the little bit of land which he cultivated by the help of his family. He was a simple, open-hearted peasant, one who lived in the fear and love of God, and who trained up his children in the same course. His wife, Bertranda de Moras, was the fitting partner of such a man, and they lived not only without reproach, but with edification to their neighbours. Among their children was one, the fourth, born in 1576, whose fervent piety and precocious ability attracted the especial attention of his parents. He laboured in the fields with the others, he shared in watching the sheep and swine, yet he was unlike those about him. His vocation for the priesthood soon made itself manifest, and when his father had determined to direct his education to that object, the question arose as to the cheapest way of doing so, for his narrow means could not attempt much. He therefore sent him to the Franciscan friars at Dax, who received him for the small sum of sixty livres, or about six pounds a year. In 1596 he went to the University of Toulouse, when he was twenty years of age. His parents sent him their blessing, and sold two of their oxen to provide him with the means for his journey.

His studies progressed and prospered, and on September 23, 1600, he was ordained priest. What his labours were, and what his successes, how they have been extended and continued down to our own days, is written in many a volume, and recorded in many a heart. Knowing these things, the soul of that man would indeed be cold who could visit St. Vincent's cradle without feeling those emotions which Dr. Johnson, in his travels to the Hebrides, ascribes to every generous mind at the sight of spots rendered famous by saintly deeds or by saintly men.

The group of buildings which now occupies the place where St. Vincent was born presents a very handsome and striking appearance. There is the highly finished new church, the high altar of which stands on the very spot of his nativity; near it is the old house in which he first saw the light, and which has been removed, plank by plank, to

give place to the church; and, opposite both, the noble oak, under which the shepherd saint in his boyhood often sought repose and meditation, spreads its ancient branches. Behind these are a large hospital, asylum for the aged, and schools for the young, furnishing models of all the various institutions of religion or charity, for which the disciples of St. Vincent are celebrated. The entire forms a pleasing combination of much architectural lightness and beauty. The church, which is monumental, is a graceful building in the style of the Renaissance, in the form of a Latin cross. It consists of a single nave, circular apse, and transept. The hospital, or hospice, is a rectangular building, with a tasteful façade.

For a long time a chapel or oratory was all that stood upon this spot, but the zeal of the Bishop of Aire being inflamed, he availed himself of the favourable reaction in Catholic feeling which took place in 1848, and appealed to the generosity of the French nation, through which he was enabled to replace the small chapel by a structure not altogether unworthy of the virtues and the labours of the great apostle of charity. His undertaking, by the contributions of the faithful, was rendered a really Catholic work; and, under the direction of Mgr. Launelac, the church was finished and consecrated within fourteen years from the period of its commencement. These buildings have been erected upon the farm which belonged to the parents of St. Vincent. Among the young orphans in the schools at the time of our visit, we were shown a graceful little girl, who is a lineal relation of the saint, and bears the family name of De Paul.

Instead of building the monumental church over the house in which Vincent was born, as has been done over our Lady's house at Loretto, it was considered advisable to remove the house, board by board and stick by stick, and construct the church on its site. It was said that the church was likely to be permanent, but that the timbers of the house were fast falling to decay. I do not quite enter into this idea. I would have preferred to see the old house

on its own old site, and the church at its side, blessing it with its shadow. It does not, however, fail to be most interesting, even in its present location. It is entirely of wood, now much discoloured from age, but still in perfect preservation. The room in which Vincent came into the world is small, but in proportion to the size of the house. It has been converted into a chapel, where Mass is occasionally said. In this apartment some precious relics, of the authenticity of which there cannot be any doubt, are preserved: a sleeve of his mantle, a pair of his slippers, the crucifix before which he prayed in his latter years, and some of his ribs. Under the altar there is a plaster cast of his face that was taken immediately after his death. I think there is another similar in the church in the Rue du Sarrasin, Paris, where so many memorials of him are piously kept. M. de Lagrèze, of Pau, possesses an illuminated prayer-book, 'Les Heures,' which had belonged to the saint, and which has his autograph at the foot of the last page, Vincent de Paul.

The famous oak has been surrounded by a paling, to preserve it from the depredations of visitors. As a bright full moon shone through its naked branches on that February evening, I looked at it with feelings almost as much of respectful awe as of religious veneration. It is recorded that, when quite a child, Vincent used to clamber up and hide himself in its branches, that he might say his little prayers undisturbed. At a later age, whenever his parents missed him, they were sure to find him in the hollow of this tree, as if in a cell. When he was sent to herd the flock in the neighbourhood, he would steal away and retire to his beloved oak and pray, while he watched his charge from its boughs. When other boys were amusing themselves with the tricks and plays of healthy infancy, Vincent would quietly withdraw, and seek his recreation in solitude and prayer, in the heart of his favourite tree.

It is said by his biographer, Mgr. Abelly, Bishop of Rhodez, that his birth in the vicinity of the sanctuary of our Lady of Buglose was one of the great influences which

first developed in him that tender devotion to the blessed Virgin which inspired his whole existence. In 1623 Vincent gave a mission to the convicts at Bordeaux, a class that was ever his peculiar care. Finding himself so near to his birth-place, he paid a visit to his relations. He encouraged in them the practice of virtue, impressed on them love for the lowliness of their own condition, and forbade them to look to him for pecuniary assistance so long as they could live by the labour of their own hands. He renewed his baptismal vows in the parochial church of Pouëy, and dedicated himself anew to God, in the place where he had first received the inspirations of divine grace. He made a pilgrimage with bare feet, from the church of Pouëy to the sanctuary of Buglose, which is about four miles distant. He was accompanied by his brothers and sisters, and other relations, while many of the inhabitants of the parish formed a procession in their train. St. Vincent celebrated Mass on this occasion, in the chapel at Buglose, and the altar at which he officiated is still preserved in the new church. This was his last visit to his native place.

In 1853, a meeting took place at Buglose of a deputation from the conferences of the Society of St. Paul in Dax, St. Sever, and Bayonne, under the presidence of the Bishop of Aire. The deputation was eloquently addressed by Father Baret of the Oblates of Mary; he alluded to the venerable oak in the following impressive strains:—'What is the tree, my brethren, which at present shelters us? What does this giant, who counts its life by centuries, speak to us? What emotions are not awakened in our hearts by its holy shadow? Here it was that another Abraham pitched his glorious and prolific tent; here it was that Vincent of Paul passed the days of his youth. This tree saw his boyhood come and go; it was the confidant of his innocent aspirations. It has murmured in response to his infant prayers; perhaps even it has been witness to the revelations and promises of God. Perhaps the young priest, kneeling under its shade, saw pass before

him the long line of that innumerable family, which will carry his name onward to the latest ages. Children of the patriarch of charity, this for you is the vale of Hebron, this oak is for you the oak of Mambre. How beautiful it is to tread this soil, to breathe this air, to repose under these branches! What a charm to transport ourselves back to those olden times, and in imagination become actors in the scenes which have illustrated them! . . . . . Well-nigh three centuries have gone by since this oak sheltered that marvellous child. That child became a man, that man has passed away, but the oak remains. There are in nature, at the side of man, a thousand beings more durable than he, beings who have existed before him, and who will survive him. Surely, in comparison with these enduring existences, the life of man is but a breath! What is it, what are we, when compared to this oak? Ephemeral fragile reeds! But if our earthly existence is evanescent, our spirit is immortal. According to the expression of a great writer, if man is but a reed, it is a reed that thinks ("si l'homme est un roseau, c'est un roseau pensant"). . . . Man is the true sceptre of God; man, with his weaknesses and frailties, but man borne up by God, warmed upon the heart of God, animated by his Divine Spirit, becomes the docile organ of his sovereign will. And this is the mystery which we may here adore. This mighty oak has seen the humble shepherd, who loved its shade so well, pass away long since; his life was but as a day in its history. But that life is not all eclipsed; it shines gloriously in heaven, and perpetuates daily in its descendants its existence upon earth. These branches cover but a small space of ground; St. Vincent of Paul has spread his branches over the whole world. The lightning or the axe might destroy the tree in an instant; St. Vincent of Paul is indestructible: that reed of a day now covers the whole earth with its shadow, and the hand that should attempt to uproot its gigantic trunk would open an abyss that ten centuries could not close. Yes! my brethren, for those who can reflect and understand, there is here a fund

of marvellous revelation. Yes! this venerable tree eloquently proclaims the magnificence of the power of God in the works of his servant and champion!'*

At the close of his long and laborious life, the health of this indefatigable workman completely broke down. For some years he was unable to walk, and at last his infirmities prevented him from moving downstairs, so that he was obliged to say Mass in the chapel in the infirmary. After a while, he entirely lost the use of his limbs, and could no longer stand at the altar. Every morning after Mass he repeated the prayers of the Church for those who are in their last agony, and the commendation of a departing soul; while every night he made ready to meet the Judge whom he had served so long and faithfully. Deep humility dwelt in his heart and spoke from his lips in lowliest accents of self-condemnation. 'One of these days,' said he to those about him, 'the miserable body of this old sinner will be laid in the ground; it will turn to dust, and you will tread it under foot. Alas! my Lord, I live too long, for there is no amendment in me, and my sins multiply with the number of my years.' Some days before his death, he became subject to frequent attacks of lethargic heaviness, which he recognised as a sure forerunner of the last great sleep. 'This is the brother,' he said with a sweet smile; 'the sister will not long delay her coming.'

At a quarter past four, on the morning of September 27, 1660, M. le Prêtre, who was a member of the conferences, and one of Vincent's particular friends, came into the chamber. Vincent was in his chair, from which he had not moved for twenty-four hours, on account of his extreme weakness. M. le Prêtre begged him to give his blessing for the last time to the order to which he belonged, and to pray God that it might never degenerate from its first favour. The dying saint, instead of a blessing, gave a promise, replying in the words of St. Paul, 'He who hath begun a good work in you will bring——': his voice

* *La Couronne de Notre-Dame de Buglose*, p. 193.

failed him before he could complete the verse; he bowed his head and expired. No change passed over that benign countenance. Vincent seemed still sleeping in his chair, but he was in the presence of his merciful Master. The fathers of the mission were saying matins when Vincent de Paul died, in his hospital at Paris, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

The body, which remained perfectly flexible, was exposed, first in the house, and then in the church of St. Lazarus, until the following day, when it was enclosed in a leaden coffin. The heart of the saint was deposited in a silver vase, which the Duchesse d'Aiguillon presented for that purpose. All Paris followed him in crowds to the grave; high and low alike endeavoured to testify their love and reverence to one who had been the friend and benefactor of every class. His body was interred in the centre of the choir, and on his tomb is inscribed the following epitaph:—'*Hic jacet venerabilis vir Vincentius in Paulo, presbyter, fundator seu institutor et primus superior generalis Congregationis Missionis necnon Puellarum charitatis. Obiit die* 27 *Septembris anni* 1660, *ætatis vero suæ* 85.'*

The venerable fathers who occupy 'Le Berceau' accommodate persons of either sex who wish to withdraw for a short time from the world and make a retreat. There is a special apartment for ladies, who are placed under the care of the sisters of St. Vincent. The worthy and hospitable Superior urged us much to become his guests for some days, but it was with true regret that we found that our arrangements did not allow us to accept the invitation. A full moon shone lovingly over the church, the low roof of the venerable house, and athwart the old oak-tree, when, with hearts overflowing and refreshed, we proceeded through a dark wood of young pines to Buglose.

* *Life of St. Vincent of Paul*, pp. 203–207. By Henry Bedford, M.A.

OUR LADY OF BUGLOSE.

OUR LADY OF BUGLOSE.

(LANDES.)

'A deux lieues de la ville d'Acqs, qui est aussi évêché en Gascogne, en la paroisse de Buglose, il y a environ dix ans qu'on y trouva miraculeusement une image de Notre-Dame, laquelle fut portée avec grande solennité dans l'église où elle est maintenant. Ceux d'alentour s'étant affectionnez à y honorer la Reine des Anges, elle a aussi fait des merveilles pour leur faire ressentir ses faveurs.'—P. POIRÉ, *La triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, p. 271. (1630.)

ON the confines of the Landes and Chalosse, in the parish illustrated by the birth of St. Vincent de Paul, and in the middle of the sands, stands an ancient shrine, venerable in the traditions of the country and the faith of its inhabitants. Countless pilgrims have knelt before it in bygone times, and their number has not diminished in the present day. Few spots, not even Garaison itself, are more favourable to meditation and prayer. The only noise that intrudes upon the peaceful retreat is that of the tread of pilgrims, the song of psalmody, the lowing of the herds, or that melancholy and indefinable harmony which the pine forest sends forth as it replies to the breeze. To the north and east of the chapel, plains of sand, covered by a low heather, spread to an unlimited extent; to the west are visible the vast forests of Marensin; in the distant south, the horizon is bounded by the rugged peaks of the Pyrenees, and by the fertile hills of Chalosse, watered by the winding Adour. On one side nature is all severe—arid sand, solitary steppes; on the other, she reigns over graceful sites, pleasant valleys, and grassy fields. Above this varied landscape towers Our Lady of Buglose, invoking upon it the blessing and protection of Heaven. 'The faith of our

ancestors,' writes Canon Labarrère, 'has multiplied the sanctuaries of the Queen of Angels, as numerous asylums opened to the sorrowing of earth where affliction so much abounds. Some are elevated upon the rugged mountain tops, attracting to heaven the eyes and the thoughts of men; others flourish, like a nosegay of flowers, in the bosom of fertile valleys and pleasant plains. Some are built upon lofty promontories, jutting into the sea, as if to invite the tempest-tossed sailor to place his confidence in her who can appease the storms; others, again, seem to delight in solitude and silence, where the soul, disenchanted, may withdraw from the world and meditate upon the eternal years. And this is the character of that blessed sanctuary whose history I am going to recount.'

The origin of the pilgrimage of Our Lady of Buglose, like that of Bétharram, is almost lost in its antiquity. However, it is certain that the blessed Virgin was an object of veneration at a very early period in that district, and it is undoubted that shortly after their conversion to Christianity the Gauls of these countries became devout clients of Mary. It was their custom to make simple oratories to Her in the hollows of the trees; and they used to pluck the wild flowers of the forest, and place them as offerings of their affection before her image, in those distant days, even as they do now.

Few countries have suffered more from war and waste than the Landes of Gascony, from the Adour to the Garonne. When the barbarians flooded the land, the Christians were accustomed carefully to conceal the objects of religious veneration and the statues of the blessed Virgin in the most inaccessible glens of the forest; and when the invaders had withdrawn, the statues were replaced. It sometimes happened that they lost all trace of the hiding-place, and then it is said that it generally was discovered by some supernatural interposition. The invasions of the Goths were succeeded by the more terrible invasions of the Moors. They in their turn drove before them the Iberian and Gascon population of the

Pyrenees, and, taking possession of the mountains, their inhabitants were compelled to fly, and seek refuge in the sterile solitudes of the Landes. But, like the Israelites, they carried with them the emblems of their worship and the sacred objects of their veneration.

The tradition of the country ascribes the origin of this pilgrimage to those days of trouble. It is certain that documents, which existed in the archives of the sanctuary at the time of the Huguenot wars, reported that there had been at Buglose, from time immemorial, an oratory dedicated to our Lady, and endeared to the people by the possession of a statue which they held in much reverence. Opinion is divided as to the identity and period of the statue which now occupies the place of the first image. It is, however, a *chef-d'œuvre*. The variety and richness of its polychromic ornaments, the texts engraven on the borders of the mantle, a wonderful expression of goodness, sweetness, and commiseration which illuminates the countenance, give reason to believe that it belongs to a great epoch of Catholic art. The Abbé Labarrère considers that it belongs to the school of the Renaissance, before regenerated art had yet lowered its high religious inspirations to the rules of cold materialism. If this supposition be correct, the present statue is no longer that which was venerated by the people for upwards of three centuries, and which had been the instrument of numerous miracles, as the history of the sanctuary testifies. The destruction of the archives of this oratory during the 'wars of religion' leaves us without any certain information upon this subject, as well as upon that of many miracles known to have taken place and still remembered traditionally.

The following is the elaborate description which the enthusiastic author of 'La Couronne de N.-D. de Buglose' gives of this interesting statue:—'This statue, remarkable for its finish, was originally ornamented by polychromic decorations which have not been altogether effaced by fifty years' immersion in a marsh. The course

of time, however, and the bad taste of the age had obliterated these precious remains, but they have been restored, and the outrages of time and barbarity repaired. The Virgin is seated, in queenly majesty, upon a throne richly sculptured, with a scarlet seat, ornamented with black and gold crochet-work. Her head, drawn back with dignity, bends slightly towards the left shoulder. The right arm hangs down, and the tips of the fingers press the foot of the infant Saviour; the left arm, encircling Him, clasps Him to his Mother's bosom. Features pure and gentle, harmonious lines, large deep eyes, a delicate mouth, hands finely chiselled, an easy and ethereal *pose*, a lifelike expression, all demonstrate that it is a work of the first period of the Renaissance. The hair, tastefully plaited, is bound by a ribbon on the back of the head, and divided on the middle of the forehead. The countenance and hands of the Virgin, as well as the body of the Child, have preserved the soft and animated complexion of nature, and are painted flesh-colour. The colour of the hair is that of a ripe ear of wheat, sprinkled with golden powder. Over the throne, behind the Virgin, is draped a purple cloak, brocaded with gold and studded with bees and *fleurs-de-lis*; over her shoulders is thrown a large mantle of azure starred with gold, which falls at the left side over the arm of the chair; drooping to the right, over the arms of the Mother of God, it covers her knees and sweeps to the ground in large wavy folds, which conceal the lower limbs of the Infant. The dress of the Virgin is a jacket cut square, open at the neck, and fitting close to the waist, with tight sleeves. Large palm-leaves and flowers gracefully droop from the sleeves and waist, on a bright red ground, shaded by golden embroidery. The ends of a handsome neckerchief join crosswise on her breast; and from a cross hangs a dove, the mysterious symbol of the divine maternity. On the fringe which borders the collar of her robe may be read, in golden letters on a green ground, the first words of the Canticle of Mary: *Magnificat anim . . . minum.* (*Sic.*) On

the edges of the chair may be read the versicle: *Ejice ergo . . . cata nostra illos tuos.* (*Sic.*) Such are the principal characters of this great and impressive figure. In its presence all other architectural excellences seem nothing; the entire church is pervaded by it, and every eye involuntarily turns towards it and remains fixed upon it.'* As its position is elevated, a large telescope is kept in the church to permit visitors to study and contemplate its beauties at leisure. The statue and the chair are carved out of the same block of marble, of a very fine and close grain.

As I have had occasion before to mention, Jeanne d'Albrecht issued an edict, in 1569, directing that all the rural oratories should be levelled to the ground, as promoters of silly superstitions ('folles superstitions'). Our Lady of Buglose did not escape a storm which ravaged Bétharram and Sarrance, and accordingly, in 1570, her oratory and its treasures were sacked and burned, and nothing but a heap of ruins was to be seen in this once-favoured spot. The venerated statue must have perished with the archives in the flames, had not a few courageous votaries been able to bear it away. In order to conceal it effectually, and pressed by alarm in their flight, they threw it into a neighbouring morass, which since then has been drained, and which lay at a few feet distant from the present Fountain of Miracles.

Those valiant Christians thus concealed the statue with the hope that when tranquillity should return they might restore it to its former position. But peace was not established during their lives, and they took with them to the grave the secret of its hiding-place, trusting for its future discovery rather to the designs of Providence than to the discretion of man. In this expectation they were not disappointed. In 1620 Louis XIII. revoked the acts which had oppressed the Catholics, and in that same year the lost statue of our Lady of Buglose was recovered, reappearing, as the historian says, 'like the rainbow in

* *La Couronnement de N.-D. de Buglose*, pp. 326–330. Appendix N.

the heavens—a messenger of calm after the previous tempest.'

A shepherd of the parish of Pouëy, who was accustomed to feed his cattle in a pasturage not far from the place where the image had been concealed, observed upon several occasions that one of the oxen was in the habit of separating from the herd and getting into the morass, where, sinking up to its knees, it uttered loud plaintive bellowings. After a time his curiosity became excited by this strange proceeding, and not being able, on account of the briers and thorns, to get sufficiently close to the spot, he clambered up into an oak-tree, from which he could see into the marsh. To his bewilderment, he perceived a mysterious object, which, to his affrighted eyes, seemed to be animated with life. The ox was licking it affectionately; its shape was that of a human form, and it seemed to have its legs in the waters of the swamp. The cowherd was transported with wonder, and he instantly ran to inform his master, who gave speedy notice of the prodigy to the curé. The intelligence circulated among the neighbours, and the priest, accompanied by several of his parishioners, hastened to the spot.

They made a passage with briers and rushes into the marsh, and thus succeeded in reaching the object, when, to their surprise and joy, they found that it was a statue of the blessed Virgin, holding the Divine Child in her arms. They were able to transport it to dry land with little difficulty, when they saluted and embraced it with affection, recognising in it all the distinctive marks of the statue for which they had so long grieved and sought. Old people who had known the oratory before its destruction by the Huguenots, and seen the statue, at once recognised the long-lost image. 'It is indeed our Lady!' they cried out. 'Yes! it is she. See, how she holds the infant Jesus in her arms! It is she herself; she is so little altered, that it must have been by a miracle that she has been preserved during so long a time in the swamp without disfiguration or injury. Oh! if some of the old priests should return with her and bless our pilgrimage again.'

Such and similar language proclaimed the belief of the people in the identity of the statue that had been found with that for which they had so long sighed. As they were indebted for this happy discovery to the supernatural lowing of an ox, they changed the name of the place, and, in perpetuation of the event, called it thenceforward BUGLOSE.* This account is given by M. Mauriol, and is represented in a series of pictures, painted on the walls of the Fountain of Miracles.

This occurrence became the subject of judicial investigation on the part of Mgr. Jacques de Saulb, Bishop of Dax; the result of this enquiry was to affirm the supernatural character of the discovery, and to recommend the pilgrimage to the devotion of the faithful. The holy prelate was himself the first to give expression to this recommendation, and his example was followed by the people, whose cries of exultation filled the desert once more with joy. He directed that the statue should be translated to the parochial church of Pouëy, as a more suitable location than the lonely wilderness near which it had been found.

Accordingly, the sacred image was placed upon a cart, to which two oxen were harnessed, followed by a large crowd of people. The oxen moved on slowly, until they had travelled about half a mile, when suddenly they stopped. Every effort was tried in vain to induce them to proceed, no force of whip or goad could make them stir, when some one in the crowd remembered that the spot at which they had halted was that on which had stood the former oratory. This was received as a revelation of the will of the blessed Virgin that in the place which had once been devoted to her honour, her ancient image should again be elevated. The Bishop of Dax accepted the indication, and, assisted by the contributions of the faithful, he succeeded in erecting a new chapel upon the old site,

* The name of *Buglose* is supposed by some to be derived from the old French word, *bucgles*; while others derive it from the Greek words, βοῦς, *ox*, γλῶσσα, *tongue*.

with such rapidity that it seemed as if the walls rose up by enchantment, and in two years it was ready for consecration. On Pentecost Monday, 1662, a general procession took place, and Mgr. de Saulb performed the imposing ceremony of consecration with much solemnity. Since that time, the great day of pilgrimage at Buglose is on Pentecost Monday. The number of pilgrims has increased yearly, as the devotion to our Lady becomes greatly developed through the facilities afforded by railways in modern locomotion.

In the course of the year 1662 and the following year, no less than twenty-four authenticated miracles of public notoriety took place at Buglose: a commission was appointed by the bishop to enquire and examine, and M. Mauriol, the first historian of the sanctuary, tells us that the result was a clear and unanswerable conviction of their supernatural character. If I were to relate the pilgrimages and miracles that rendered Buglose celebrated, not only throughout the country of the Landes, but beyond the Pyrenees, from the period of its restoration to that of the French Revolution, I should fill another volume. During all that period it was frequented most especially by seafaring men or their families, and many touching histories are narrated of shipwrecks escaped and mariners saved through the invocation of our Lady of Buglose.

In 1706 Buglose was placed under the direction of the Lazarist Fathers; and thus, by the providence of God, the children of St. Vincent became spiritual pastors and directors in that very parish where their father and founder had been only an obscure shepherd. One of the most distinguished of their number, Father Mauriol, records a miraculous recovery in his own person. His excessive labours had brought on a violent pleurisy in 1725, which threatened a fatal termination. Being in this condition, he made a vow to our Lady of Buglose to devote the remainder of his life to her service if he was permitted to recover and finish the history of her sanctuary, upon which he was engaged. He had scarcely pronounced

his vow when all his dangerous symptoms disappeared, and he rapidly recovered. 'And this testimony,' he writes, 'I have believed it my duty to leave to posterity, in gratitude for the wonderful favour received by me on the 25th of April, 1723.'

In 1709, Buglose was visited and endowed by Marie Anne de Newbourg, Queen Dowager of Spain, who was miraculously restored to health while praying before the statue. In 1725, Benedict XIII. bestowed upon it his protection, and granted to it many privileges and indulgences. The bishops of Dax were emulous of each other in the affection and favour which they exhibited towards it, and their example has been religiously imitated by the present diocesan, the illustrious Bishop of Aire.

Such was the position of Buglose when the French Revolution broke out. The germs of revolt and of social dissolution implanted by the 'Reformation' had begun to develope and expand. The doctrine, which rejected the yoke of divine authority on earth, had enunciated a principle of destruction, sapping all human power and jurisdiction at their base. France had riotously put the poisoned chalice to her intoxicated lips, and in expiation of her manifold crimes was condemned to drain the cup to its dregs. But, even while all society was rocking to its centre, the powerful hand of Mary visibly protected her chapel in the Landes. While the neighbouring churches and oratories were destroyed, the chapel of Buglose, by a singular interposition, was spared. The sacrilegious spoliators had entered the sanctuary, sword in hand. Ruffian oaths echoed through the place of prayer; the ladders for demolition were put up, the hatchet was about to descend upon the altar, when unexpectedly a strange terrific sound rang through the vaults of the temple, like peals of thunder crashing through the roof. It was as if a murmur of indignation had burst from the angels-guardian of the church; and the demolishers, struck with consternation, flung away their implements, and fled precipitately.

The impious decrees of the Convention had smitten the shepherd and dispersed the flock: the venerated statue again was in danger, and again it was removed by courageous hands to a place of safety. Some of the good fathers still lingered in the neighbourhood of their dear sanctuary. By day they hid themselves in the woods, by night they stealthily visited the houses and villages, baptizing the newly-born, comforting the sick, administering the sacraments to the living and the dying. The sufferings and heroism of the French clergy at this period resemble those of the Catholic priests in England during the days of persecution. Some fearless Christians still continued to visit the deserted sanctuary; and those few devoted clients, who knelt before the Sion of the desert, might hang up their harps and weep over the recollections of its glorious solemnities.

The justice of God, which scourges nations no less than individuals, seldom tries either beyond their strength; and it was not possible that a country in which devotion to Mary had been so deep-rooted could be abandoned by Her. Her divine Son at last yielded to her intervention; and peace and religion once more reigned in France. The Church, dripping with the blood of its martyrs, in this district as in others, renewed its ministry, its temples were restored, and the worship which had been proscribed was resumed with fervour and thanksgiving. In the new order of things, Dax ceased to be a bishop's see, and was incorporated in the diocese of Aire.

Although the Revolution had not utterly annihilated Buglose, it had overwhelmed it with desolation. There, on all sides, the spectacle was one of mourning. The monastery had been confiscated; the chapel, although supernaturally saved from destruction, was almost in utter dilapidation; the grass grew in its porticoes; its corridors were silent, no voice sounded from its pulpit, no sacrifice was offered on its altars. Notwithstanding the renovation in religion which prevailed throughout the country, its beneficial effects did not reach Buglose for a

considerable time. The chapel, it is true, was opened, but it was served only by an old Lazarist priest, who had survived the scattering of his brethren; and having been made Curé of Pontons, said Mass occasionally at the neglected shrine. But the faith of the people called for more efficient assistance, and a chaplain was specially appointed, until, under the fostering hands of the bishops of the new diocese of Aire, Buglose began to recover its ancient position.

Mgr. Trévern, well known to English Catholics as the author of 'La Discussion amicale,' was the first who, as Bishop of Aire in 1825, gave his attention to the revival of the devotion to our Lady of Buglose. He was, however, translated to the see of Strasburg, where, in early life, it was the good fortune of the present writer to enjoy his enlightened hospitality, to which he now refers with recollections of gratitude and respect. After the memorable 'Three Days' of 1830, I was the guest of Mgr. Trévern at Strasburg with my beloved friend and fellow-traveller Dr. Weedall (afterwards Monsignore), of Oscott College.* We witnessed the superb illumination of that magnificent cathedral and its unrivalled spire; and, what was more impressive in a moral sense, we were witnesses of the disgust and dislike with which that wise prelate found himself compelled to lend his cathedral to the glorification of the new Revolution.

It is to one of his successors, Mgr. Lanneluc, that the glory of restoring Buglose to its pristine importance belongs. Having visited it, he was touched by all that he there saw and heard, and resolved upon taking measures for its complete re-establishment. In 1844 he succeeded

* 'Dr. Weedall left St. Mary's College in June 1830, on his continental tour. He landed at Rotterdam, but by some mistake did not stop at Nonnenwerth. He was recognised, however, by Mr. Shyne Lawlor, as the steamboat passed the island, and joined by him the next day at Coblentz. They stopped a day at St. Goar and another at Bruges. At Mentz they passed four or five days very delightfully, as they were pleased to say, at the house of some connections of the writer. Thence they proceeded to Strasburg, where they were domiciled with the illustrious Bishop Trévern.'—*Life of Monsignor Weedall*, p. 164. By Rev. F. C. Husenbeth, D.D.

in repurchasing the old monastery of the Lazarists, and settled therein a body of these missionaries, to whose preaching and exertions the devotion of the people amply responded; and pilgrimages became as frequent and as crowded as in former days. Since then the mysterious impulse which has inflamed the hearts of the people towards our Lady of Buglose has never ceased. Nothing seems to relax the fervour of the pilgrims—neither the cold of winter nor the heat of summer. At all seasons those who are in affliction, or those who suffer from bodily ailments, hasten to present their supplications in this sanctuary, and, if in proper dispositions, invariably return consoled or cured. While the cholera raged, when men were cut down like corn before the sickle, the entire population of the district, even from the city of Bordeaux, flocked thither, and in their alarm sought the protection of Her who never has been known in any age, as St. Bernard assures us, to desert those who seek her aid: 'ad tua currentem præsidia, tua implorantem auxilia, tua petentem suffragia.'

Miraculous cures and supernatural interventions have not ceased to confirm the faith of the pilgrim in his reliance upon our Lady of Buglose. I will mention two of them. A Spanish colonel, of the name of Garcia, arrived at Bayonne at the close of the Carlist war, and was suffering cruelly from a wound in the leg, received in one of the last battles. Although the ball had been extracted, the pain continued, and he became unable to walk, except by the aid of crutches. He went to Dax, but he found no relief even from its famous mud baths. He heard, however, many wonderful accounts of the cures said to be miraculously performed at Buglose, and he felt a presentiment that his own recovery was to be accomplished at the feet of Mary. He mentioned this impression to a French officer, his friend; at first he rallied him upon his credulity, but shortly came to respect his conviction, and urged him to follow it; adding, that if he should be cured at Buglose, he himself would become a convert and a

good Catholic. Accordingly Garcia set out for Buglose, accompanied by three friends, a Spanish priest, Colonel Jauréguy, and a lady. Having prayed fervently, he proceeded to the miraculous pool, and washed his wounded leg. Suddenly he was seen to tremble all over, to lift his hands to heaven, while tears rolled from his eyes, and he walked forth—cured. He hung up his crutches in the 'Chapel of Miracles,' and never more required their use. On his return to Dax the town was filled with emotion by his cure: they had seen his miserable condition; they saw his marvellous restoration. No one was more impressed than the French officer; his old principles revived in his heart, and in a few days afterwards he was to be seen among the pilgrims who knelt at Buglose, praying for grace and courage to perfect the good resolutions with which he had been inspired.

Mdlle. Caroline de Poyuzan, of a respectable family in Dax, had returned from school in 1852. She had distinguished herself by her talents and piety under the able instruction of 'Les Dames de la Réunion' at Bordeaux, and promised to be the pride and consolation of her parents. But a serious illness had attacked her, and reduced her to a state of profound prostration and debility. The physician in attendance gave no hope of her permanent restoration; the muscles of her knees had undergone a violent contraction, so that she could touch the ground only with the top of her left foot. An ingenious contrivance had been made to assist her in walking, but such was the weakness of her arms that she could not balance herself upon this species of crutch unless there was some one behind to support her. She tried the mud baths, but without any better result than Colonel Garcia had found. All human aid had proved ineffectual, and her pious mother determined to invoke that of religion. A novena of Masses in honour of the blessed Virgin was begun on her behalf, in her old convent of 'La Réunion.' On the day of their commencement her sufferings were

worse than ever, but on the ninth day she had become so much better that she was able to travel to Buglose to fulfil a vow. There she heard Mass and received holy Communion, after which she was carried in a chair to the Fountain of Miracles. She was placed in the pool, and her aching limbs were being washed by her mother, when instantaneously, to use her own words, she felt as if she was lifted up by two hands, and a new life began to circulate through her paralysed members, and turning towards her mother, she said, 'Mother, I feel that I can walk; an interior voice is crying out to me, "Marche, marche;" an invisible hand is pushing me on.' 'Obey the voice, my child,' replied the mother; and immediately she rose up and walked, alone and without any support, from the fountain to the chapel, a distance of about forty paces, and there she threw herself upon her knees before the image of Mary—'Salus infirmorum.' Her cure was complete, and she returned to Dax as strong and active as she ever had been previous to her illness. These facts are stated in a declaration signed by Dr. Cantin, who had attended her, and by several reputable witnesses. Dr. Grateloup, an eminent physician of Bordeaux, writing to her father, who had communicated to him the instantaneous cure of his daughter, says: 'I cannot sufficiently congratulate you and your excellent invalid, who by means of succour derived from religion has had her paralysed limbs restored to their normal state. Heaven directs all things in this world, and woe to him who does not believe in the power of prayer!'*

An incident of another character is related by Father Danos, chaplain at Buglose, in his treatise 'L'Art de sanctifier le Pèlerinage.' He tells us that one day, as he was preparing in the sacristy to say Mass, a gentleman of fashionable appearance entered, and, bowing low, said, with overstrained politeness, that he had come to request

* 'Je ne pourrais assez vous en faire mes compliments, tant à vous qu'à l'excellente malade, qui, par suite des secours religieux, a vu ses jambes paralysées revenir à leur état normal. Le Ciel dirige toutes choses dans ce monde, et malheur à celui qui ne croit pas au succès de la prière.'—*Archives.*

a favour at his hands; that he and his wife had been severely afflicted by the loss of their children, by heavy sicknesses, and by other misfortunes, and that he had come to beg that a Mass might be said for their intention. The priest having willingly assented to his desire, the gentleman added that he would see him again, and give him the usual offering, and then left the church without saying a prayer or making a genuflexion. Father Danos felt some surprise at this haste; but, supposing that some matter connected with his journey required his absence, he concluded that he would return to assist at the Mass which was to be offered for his intention. After waiting for some time, and finding that he did not come back, the priest proceeded to the altar, but did not say Mass for the stranger. When the Mass was finished, the stranger came back, and informed the priest that, never having been at Buglose before, he had gone about to see the place, and expressed his wish to discharge his debt to him for the Mass. 'You owe me nothing,' said the priest; 'seeing that you had not the devotion to be present at a sacrifice from which you pretended to expect benefit, I did not think it right to offer it for you.'

'But surely,' replied the unknown, 'I engaged the Mass?' ('Hé! ne vous ai-je donc pas arrêté la messe?')

'A fine expression, indeed, *engage* the Mass!' ('Belle expression, arrêter la messe!') continued the priest; 'your language and conduct prove to me that you are entirely ignorant of the infinite excellence and value of the Mass, and that in coming here you have not considered that you were performing a pilgrimage and a solemn act of religion. In order that Mass may be said at the altar of our Lady of Buglose, faith and respect, conduct different from yours, are requisite!'

The stranger departed disconcerted, and on his arrival at home, informed his wife of the failure of his mission, and the lecture that he had received from the priest. But she, being remarkable for her piety, was greatly distressed by the event; she wrote at once to Father Danos in terms

of deep regret, endeavoured to excuse the conduct of her husband, and solicited him to fix a day on which to say Mass for their intention, at which both of them might attend. They arrived at Buglose on the appointed day, and the husband, no less than his wife, edified the priest and congregation by their faith and fervour. Father Danos adds, 'Their piety found favour with God;' for, as I have since heard from the lady, the object of their petition was granted.'*

Gregory XVI. confirmed the indulgences granted by Benedict XIII., and added new privileges. The old church was no longer sufficient to contain the number that frequented it, and the bishop turned his attention to the construction of a new building more suitable to the object and the place. The contributions of the faithful throughout France were not slow in realising the large funds that were required; and there now stands on the summit of the Landes, crowning a sandy and sombre forest, one of the noblest and grandest churches in which I have ever knelt. This monument is a vast parallelogram, with nave and aisles. Its exterior lines are imposing, but its chief beauty is within. The apse has five sides, and forms the sanctuary, properly so called; the choir has two bays; in the nave there are four, exclusive of the porch, over which is placed a gallery. The general style of the edifice is Romanesque, highly ornamented. The vaults are semicircular, with projecting ribs, carried by groups of shafts and supported by circular flying buttresses.

The church is lighted by thirty-seven round-headed and three rose windows. Twenty-one windows open in the clerestory, and sixteen in the aisles. A large rose window, divided into eleven compartments by a network of mullions, diverging from the centre to the circumference, is placed in the western front; two smaller rose windows are in the lateral chapels, which occupy the place of the transept. A magnificent Romanesque doorway, composed of five con-

* *Pèlerinage de St. Vincent de Paul et de N.-D. de Buglose*, p. 208. Par l'abbé Danos, chapelain du lieu. (1844.)

centric archivolts, forms the entrance into the large vestibule, which has almost the proportions of a church. At the north side is the restored chapel of Our Lady of the Scapular, so dear to every pilgrim; it is lit by a large trefoil window. Here may be seen the altar of our Lady of Buglose, which has been restored. It was right to preserve this interesting relic as a valued memorial of former graces.

The capitals of the four columns which support the apse are remarkable; a scene from the history of Buglose is sculptured upon each capital. The altar of the northern chapel is dedicated to St. Vincent of Paul. It possesses an old statue of him that was executed by one of the early Lazarist Fathers: although not without defects, it deserves attention, as it is said to be one of the most accurate portraits extant of the saint. In a small tabernacle underneath this statue there lies a treasure not generally known to the public—a relic of St. Vincent of Paul. The stained glass is very fine. The history of the miraculous statue and of the pilgrimage is painted on the windows which light the aisles, and commences at the left hand on entering the church. The niche in which is placed the statue of our Lady is elaborately decorated with the richest designs of the most lavish sculpture. M. Labarrère exhausts himself in his minute and affectionate details. The gilding of the church is rather overcharged; it is to be hoped that, on some future occasion, it may be toned down, and rendered more in keeping with the general character of the building.

It was on May 5, 1855, that the ancient statue was brought forth from its place of concealment, and, in the presence of the bishop, the priests of the diocese, and an immense concourse of the laity, was elevated to its present position over the high altar. It was a day of great jubilation, and I regret that my space does not allow me to narrate proceedings which give such strong illustration to the devotion to our Lady of Buglose.

About four hundred feet to the north of the church is a

well or pool, covered over, and in which the flow of water never fails. It is the spot where the statue lay so long concealed, and many miracles are recorded in the various cures of infirm and disabled persons who have washed in this pool. A little farther on is the fountain, called 'La Fontaine des Miracles,' enshrined in a species of kiosk that does not look quite suitable to the location. The pilgrims drink its water, and love to carry it away in bottles. At a few steps higher up, there is a small open oratory, called 'La Chapelle de la Fontaine.' It was here that the statue was first placed, on being discovered through the medium of the ox, and near this it subsequently was concealed during the Revolution. On its walls are painted certain lively but uncouth pictures, representing the story of the discovery of the statue in the marsh, and exhibiting the long processional line of the inhabitants of Dax, who came, in 1622, to be present at the consecration of the old chapel and at the blessing of the statue. This site, thus occupied by a group of religious recollection that is full of interest and pious sentiment, is lonely and quiet. I visited it in the twilight of a dewy morning in February, and could comprehend the full influence of that spirit which has brought so many, through so many ages of time, as humble pilgrims to this shrine.

On its connection with St. Vincent of Paul, Cardinal Donnet exclaims in his sermon upon the coronation of the statue, 'Let other pilgrimages exhibit with pride the *ex-votos* hung upon their walls. Ancient Soulac and Arcachon, on the shores of the ocean; Verdelais and Bon-Encontre, on the banks of the Garonne; Notre-Dame de la Garde, by the blue Mediterranean; Roc-Amadoux, in the solitudes of Quercy; Bétharram, on the front declivities of the Pyrenees; Notre-Dame de France, on the rock of Corneille; Fourvières, on the summit which dominates the city of almsgiving; all present to the contemplation of our people precious memorials of the intercessory power of Mary. But Buglose seems destined to surpass them all; her *ex-voto* is glorious beyond those of every other; it is

the memory of St. Vincent of Paul, of those prodigies of charity which had their source in his heart, and of which all humanity at this day enjoys the consoling results.'*

In 1856, at the period of the meeting of the deputations from various Conferences of St. Paul, which I already have mentioned, Buglose was visited by Mgr. Dupuch, the first Bishop of Algiers. To this visit and the unexpected death of the holy prelate, allusion is made in the prayer which will be found at the conclusion of this chapter. Although apparently full of vigour, as he assisted at a festival at which six hundred priests were present, whom he fascinated by the simplicity and tenderness of his address, the hand of death was upon him. His last accents were those of divine love, poured forth at the feet of our Lady of Buglose; his last Mass was celebrated at her altar. He was struck by apoplexy on returning to the sacristy, and died in his vestments.

As had been the case with St. Vincent of Paul, it was at Buglose that another great servant of God, the Abbé Céstac, of the Refuge, received the first breathings of that absorbing devotion to our Lady which pervaded all his actions, and crowned with so much success his wonderful career. There is now attached to the mission-house at Buglose an asylum for aged and infirm priests. There is also a convent of the 'Servantes de Marie,' who instruct the female poor. The church and pilgrimage, as formerly, are under the direction of the Lazarist Fathers, who are ready at all hours to attend in the confessional, and administer advice and consolation there as well as in the pulpit and from the altar.

In recognition of the numerous graces experienced at Buglose, and on the supplication of the venerable Bishop of Aire, his Holiness Pius IX., in a brief dated April 11, 1866, accorded the privilege of coronation to the statue; and this event, which took place on the 9th of the following December, completes the modern epoch in the history of Buglose. Nothing could exceed the religious

* *La Couronne de N.-D. de Buglose*, p. 390.

splendour with which this ceremony was performed. The Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, in a sermon from which I have already quoted, tells us 'that the coronation of our Lady of Buglose, like all ceremonies of the same kind, forms one of the golden links of that mysterious chain which, lengthening each day as it passes upward from the earth, connects all humanity with the throne of Mary. The same cry is upon the lips of all nations; that cry has been heard on the waves of the ocean, the caves of the mountains have echoed it to the clouds, and we have listened to its voice in every sanctuary in which it has been our happiness to minister.'

Buglose inherits all the combinations that are necessary to produce profound impression upon the mind of the pilgrim—its past history, its present renown, and its monuments. Approaching it, one feels as if entering an atmosphere where 'heavenly contemplation dwells,' and wherein high and holy thoughts alone are suitable. Those plains, naked and arid as the path of toilsome life; the solemn silence of the solitude, occasionally broken by the hissing noise of the railway, which leaves behind it only a cloud of smoke, like the headlong seductions of youth; the aspect of nature, now soft and smiling, now sombre and severe, exalt the soul, and prepare it for those influences which are peculiar to our Lady of the Landes. When one enters the great nave of the church, one looks not, with an idle gaze, for the *chefs-d'œuvre* of art; one's first impulse is to fall upon one's knees, and lowly bow the head before that gentle Majesty, which is throned as it were upon an aureole of grace, and exclaim involuntarily: 'This indeed is the refuge for souls that suffer. Here man, fatigued by the agitations of life, may find peace and repose on the bosom of a tender Mother.' In all the great crises which have agitated the kingdom—tempests, plagues, wars and pestilence—it is at this shrine that the people of the Landes have humbled themselves, and prayed for pardon and succour. Each time that this image has lain in concealment it has been an epoch of desolation and distress, while its restoration invariably has

been the signal of returning prosperity and peace. In this privileged spot the miracles of the apostolic age have been renewed; the dumb speak, the deaf hear, the blind see, the paralytic takes up his bed and walks, the dying child is restored to his widowed mother, and the aged sinner learns to weep and hope.

A solitary lamp was burning before the shrine of our Lady, in the dusk of evening, when I first visited this church; a few dark hooded figures were entranced in prayer before the tabernacle, a few were kneeling round the confessional, while the stillness that prevailed was most intense and absorbing. At that moment I felt as I had felt at Massabielle, that if I could have controlled my own destiny, I would have pitched my tent for life at these sacred gates, and in penance and prayer expiated the sins of thoughtlessness, negligence, and ingratitude which stain the recollections of most men's lives. Many a time, when combating with the hard realities of the world, shall my heart and thoughts return to our Lady of Buglose, in the humble hope that she will deign to remember that I have knelt, and prayed, and wept at her shrine!

The approach to the church, as at other sanctuaries, is occupied by tents and small shops for the sale of beads, pictures, and prayers, suitable to the place itself, as well as to the recollections of St. Vincent of Paul. There are two small hotels where strangers may eat and rest. The accommodation is such as may suit the scanty requirements of a pilgrim. I separated from my excellent and edifying companion, and at an early hour proceeded on foot to the railway station through a low forest of young firs and pines. I suddenly heard in the distance the cry of hounds in full chase, and my thoughts were carried back to by-gone days and scenes. They were hare-hunting through the wood, and for a time the clamour became so earnest, that it seemed as if they would have crossed my path. Their music distracted me, and strangely mingled memories of my youth with the reflections of my old age.

A poem of considerable merit, entitled 'Nouste Dame de Buglose, Rosa Mystica!' has been written by M. V.

Bataille, and crowned by the literary society at Beziers. It relates, in the musical language of the Landes, the legend of our Lady of Buglose, and is full of descriptive pathos. I have translated it with some trouble, but finding that this volume has so far exceeded my original intention, I am compelled to withhold it, with a recommendation to all visitors to Buglose to supply my omission by procuring it for themselves. I conclude this record of Notre-Dame de Buglose with the prayer which has been adopted on the back of the memorial pictures sold near the church.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF BUGLOSE.

'O Lady of Buglose, how I love to honour you in this sanctuary which you have chosen for yourself for so many centuries! I recognise well in this selection the Mother of God who was born at Bethlehem. Like Him, you love all that is hidden and humble. You reign on high in heaven, but you establish at the same time your throne in a lowly chapel in the midst of the sands of the desert. There, many generations have experienced the marvellous effects of your power and goodness; there you welcomed St. Vincent of Paul in the days of his childhood, and there still exists the altar upon which in the days of his priesthood he offered the holy sacrifice. There also, in our own age, you welcomed another apostle, the first Bishop of Algiers, of dear and gentle memory.* O Mother! you have filled both with the abundance of your graces and made them saints; have pity also upon us who invoke you, transported in spirit to your blessed sanctuary. We unite ourselves to all the prayers and to all the homage which so many generations have offered at your feet. Show us that you are ever our Mother, that you are always our Lady of Buglose, all-powerful by your intercession, all-amiable by the tenderness of your maternal heart. Amen.' †

* Monseigneur Dupuch. † Appendix O.

THE REFUGE.

THE REFUGE.

Et que de fois encore, aux bords où de Biarritz,
Sur d'arides coteaux, blanchissent les abris,
Retiré dans les flancs de la roche excavée,
Suspendu sur les flots,
Que de fois j'ai senti mon âme captivée
Par les aspects divers de ces vastes tableaux!

THÉOPHILE POYDENOT, *Poésies diverses.*

'L'abbé Céstac avait fondé à Bayonne une maison d'orphelines dont il avait confié la direction à des saintes-filles, les Servantes de Marie. Non satisfait de cette bonne œuvre, il appela à lui les filles repenties, qu'il plaça d'abord dans les établissements spéciaux de Bordeaux et de Toulouse. Après les avoir logées ensuite provisoirement dans les combles de sa maison d'orphelines, il acheta, en 1839, entre Anglet et Biarritz, un petit domaine, sur lequel il les réunit. Secondé par les Servantes de Marie et par sa propre sœur, leur Supérieure, qui portait en religion le nom de Sœur Madeleine, l'abbé Céstac a défriché ce sol aride et obtenu des résultats merveilleux.'—LAVIGNE, *Autour de Biarritz*, p. 64.

How can I forget Biarritz, 'bright Biarritz?'—the quiet tranquil days that I passed, the agreeable acquaintance that I made, the valued friends that I left there? The remembrance comes back to me as the glow of a warm sunburst on a wintry day, and I twine round it some of the fondest recollections of my wanderings. How genial and pleasant is its aspect, how civil and courteous are its people. I had grown to be familiar and friendly with them all, and it gladdens me now at a distance to recur to many bygone scenes, and think that there are some there still who reciprocate the sentiment with which my mind warmly reverts to them. How sublime is that magnificent ocean, with its long-rolling waves bounding in tumultuous grandeur from the farthest limits of the

Atlantic until they break in thunder on the sunny Côte de Basque!

La mer, avec ses flots en ligne prolongés,
Qui se suivent toujours, en bataille rangés,
Et qui font ondoyer une blanche crinière.
* * * *
Le lourd ressac des flots ébranlant les récifs,
La mer qui, sous le roc qui se creuse et surplombe,
S'engouffre, et sourdement tonne comme la bombe,
Ces bruits éclatants ou plaintifs,
Toutes ces voix qui se répondent,
Se succèdent et se confondent,
Ce concert d'une étrange et divine grandeur
Me pénètre et m'émeut jusques au fond du cœur.*

Then those grotesque, fantastic rocks, over which the engulphing wave delights to frolic in laughing spray, and the hard silvery sands where children gambol like dolphins on the wave, and invalids inhale the saline breeze and grow strong, and the handsome villas, and gaily painted houses, and spacious hotels, and the constant rattle of omnibuses, the merry jingling of bells, and the tiresome cracking of whips! On a height over the western end of the town stands the parish church, a solid building of no great antiquity, tastefully decorated, and crowded upon Sundays by a congregation of well-dressed good-looking men and women, who, for devotion and decorum, cannot be surpassed throughout all the country of the Basques. On a high mound over the sea, nearly on a level with the church, is the *phare*, or lighthouse. When the waves lash its mighty base, and the setting sun descends in a thousand gorgeous hues behind the Spanish hills, the view from it is grand and magnificent beyond the power of prose to express. Fernan Caballero, in one of her exquisite sketches, 'El Eddystone,' observes that nothing, next to the spire of a church, so elevates the mind to heaven as the tower of a lighthouse. The purpose of both is the same—to awaken hope and promise shelter to the tempest-tossed voyager.

* Théophile Poydenot, *Poésies diverses*, 'Biarritz,' p. 179.

Biarritz boasts of some antiquity; it is mentioned in the eleventh century, when the Basques first harpooned a whale in the Gulf of Gascony. At that period several large storehouses were built at the Port-Vieux, in which were stored tuns of oil, whalebone, and all the various produce of the whale fishery. The Dutch traveller Van Aarsens tells us that the sailors belonging to this district were highly esteemed throughout all the cod and whale fisheries. At this epoch Biarritz was wealthy, so that the tithe of its revenue constituted the most important source of the income of the bishopric of Bayonne. In course of time, the whales deserted this coast, and emigrated northward; fishing became more difficult and dangerous, the Basque fishermen were unable to contend with the hardier navigators of the northern seas; their trade fell off, and with it the fortune of Biarritz declined. An old castle of the thirteenth century, erected for the defence of the port and its neighbourhood, stood on the height called *L'Atalaya*.* Shortly after the desertion of Biarritz by the whalers, this castle fell down, scattering its ruins along the slopes of the promontory; while the sea, in one of its terrible invasions, uprooted huge rocks, destroying the harbour, which had been abandoned to its fury. The Imperial Government is at present engaged in the expenditure of large sums of money on this same spot, with the object of forming a harbour of refuge for that coast.

When the whales disappeared, Biarritz degenerated into a miserable hamlet, and was inhabited only by a few poor fishermen. 'C'était la décadence, et sur ce village naguère si célèbre tomba le voile de l'oubli,' poetically writes M. Germond de Lavigne, in describing this period of its history. In the revolution of time and the search after health and pleasure, it was discovered that Biarritz possessed singular natural advantages for sea-bathing, and, about half a century ago, the fashionable world of the South began to frequent it for that purpose. During several seasons the amiable and accomplished Empress of

* An Arabic word, signifying an elevated place, also a promontory.

the French, when only Mademoiselle Montijo, sought repose and renovation on its healthful shores; and when her brilliant destiny placed her upon the throne of Imperial France, she remembered with longing the smooth sands, the bold rocks, and the rolling waves of Biarritz. She returned to its happy seclusion; and the fashion and wealth of France and of Spain following in her wake, it has become at the present day the gayest and most expensive summer resort on all the French coast. A comfortable marine villa, 'La Villa Eugénie,' fronts the ocean, under shelter of a wild hill, on which the fir-tree, low tamarisk, and many flowering shrubs have learned to flourish—

> Où quelques tamariscs, sur les sommets épars,
> Font flotter en bouquet leur délicat feuillage.

I observed over the head of her Majesty's bed two charming little pictures painted on ivory; one the portrait of St. Vincent of Paul, the other that of our Lady of Buglose. During the winter months Biarritz is a quiet, cheerful, economical place of residence, with a most salubrious climate; indeed, so much so, that on first arriving there in the month of December, I was told by an English resident that 'no one ever died at Biarritz!'

About thirty years ago, the route from Bayonne to Biarritz was a path almost imperceptible, over the sands. It was so heavy and fatiguing, that a wheeled vehicle could not venture to attempt the transit, which was usually performed on a singular kind of equipage, known as '*le cacolet.*' An old nag, badly shod, broken-kneed, a pack-saddle perched on his lean back, at either side of the saddle a contrivance for transporting necessaries—a cage for poultry, a basket for wood, with two seats, padded with straw and lined with a square piece of cloth—constituted the *cacolet.* This miserable 'turn-out' was generally conducted by a woman, sometimes young and fresh, more frequently old and tattered, but always bearing a picturesque name—Gracieuse, or Marianette, or Soubade. The *cacolet* usually stood for hire at the Porte d'Espagne, where its conductress, lounging

upon the crupper, invited customers at the top of her voice, with the interrogation, 'U cacoulet, moussu?' Having made his bargain (for in those days there was no tariff), the traveller seated himself in one of the baskets, while Gracieuse or Soubade placed herself in that at the opposite side, taking with her a large stone as balance, if required, and away they started on one of the strangest locomotives in the world. These fair conductresses were of the most unimpeachable morality and propriety of conduct. If it happened that an indiscreet youth paid more attention to his guide on the opposite side than was becoming—laughing and coquetting—Gracieuse suddenly would jump off, the balance would be deranged, and her 'fare' would roll away to flounder in the sand, and learn to be more respectful for the remainder of the drive.* But all that is changed now; there is a splendid *chaussée*, lined by stately poplars, and a public service of omnibuses, which for cheapness and comfort leaves nothing to be desired.

There are few visitors to Biarritz who do not make acquaintance with the 'Servantes de Marie' and the convent of the REFUGE; and there are fewer still of those who visit them who do not return deeply impressed by this wonderful establishment—its perfect organisation, the courtesy and cheerfulness of its inmates, their devotion to the poor, the orphan, and the fallen, their life of virtue and usefulness. The 'Refuge' is distant from Bayonne about five, and from Biarritz about three miles; it is situated, at a considerable elevation, on a wild plateau, near and upon which were the head-quarters of the Duke

* 'Gracieuse est pure Basquaise, de Guétary, à trois lieues de Bayonne, une lieue et demie de St.-Jean-de-Luz, et, d'après ses habitudes, elle ne doit avoir rien contracté de la corruption de la cité. Elle parle assez bien le français; elle a une conversation intarissable et enjouée, qui fait passer le temps et abrège la route. Elle vous raconte ses voyages, car elle ne se borne pas toujours à faire de petites journées aux environs de Bayonne. Il est arrivé que des voyageurs l'ont engagée pour aller en Galice ou en Navarre, elle et son Glorieux. Elle les a bravement conduits partout, et vous jugez ce que ces excursions lointaines lui ont donné d'expérience et d'intrépidité. Elle vous parcourt les Pyrénées de jour et de nuit, aussi tranquillement que nous revenons de Neuilly ou de Vincennes. Elle n'est plus effrayée des coups de feu des contrabandiers que nous ne le sommes des coups de pistolet du tir de Lessage ou de Renette.'—M. Prosper de LAGARDE, *Voyage à Biarritz.*

of Wellington and the Allied Army in 1814, and forms an agreeable walk from both these towns. During my sojourn at Biarritz, the Refuge was frequently the object of my promenades.

About thirty-five years ago, the Abbé Louis Edouard Céstac, having finished his theological studies at St. Sulpice, was appointed vicaire in the cathedral of Bayonne, which was his native city. He had visited Buglose at an early period of his life, and was especially attached to that sanctuary, which he loved as his spiritual parent. It was there that his young heart was first inspired with those projects, and subsequently matured that undertaking, which have been crowned with such success. During his missionary life at Bayonne, whenever he felt depressed or fatigued, he retired to Buglose, and, after a few days of retreat there, would return to his work, consoled and invigorated. He had not been long in the exercise of his ministry before he exhibited that extraordinary devotion and zeal for the service of the poor, which have placed him in the front rank of those who have imitated the example and ranged themselves under the banner of St. Vincent of Paul.

A severe winter in 1858 weighed heavily upon the poor of Bayonne. Many children made orphans were abandoned in the streets or on the highways. The attention of the young vicaire was soon attracted to their condition; he obtained permission from the bishop to provide for their relief, and, in a building little better than a granary, exposed, as he himself has told me, to the cold and inclemency of the weather, he received a few of these orphans, sheltered and fed them, while his sister and some pious women undertook their supervision. After some time, the mayor gave him an old house in a cemetery, which nobody would buy or rent on account of its position, and to this he removed his children from the deserted kitchen in which they had found their first asylum. This soon became filled, when another class of outcasts made application for his protection. A woman who had led a life of sin came

to beg that he would shelter her; her only wish was to do penance for her irregularities. He had no room to offer her, but she threw herself at his feet, imploring that he would not reject her; suddenly he remembered that there was a trapdoor in the ceiling of one of the rooms, and, finding that it opened upon a loft, he got a ladder, and there installed his penitent. She shortly was joined by two or three more of her companions; and the sister of the Abbé Céstac, who hitherto had devoted herself to the orphan children, now became the associate and directress of these Magdalens, and they lived together a life of great mortification and penance in this loft, which was neither commodious nor weather-tight. Notwithstanding every discomfort, their numbers rapidly increased.

The good work soon became known, and a benevolent citizen of Bayonne, who still survives, M. de Broc, being desirous to aid the abbé in his charitable undertaking, offered to give him a more suitable habitation in the outskirts of the city. For this purpose he put into repair a house at his disposal capable of accommodating forty penitents, and presented it to the abbé, who, when he was about to enter into possession, found himself inwardly checked by an unaccountable repugnance. From the earliest period of his life, Abbé Céstac had been inspired by a profound devotion to our Lady, and he undertook no work until he had consulted her in humble prayer.

A remarkable element in his character and conversation was the manner in which he used to discourse of his communications with the blessed Virgin, and of her revelations to him. He spoke of them as of things of ordinary occurrence, as mere matter of course, and he dwelt upon them with so much love, unction, and conviction, that no one listening to him, as I often have done, could doubt that these communications were no inventions of the brain. It was to be supposed that he had not neglected to consult his directress, as usual, regarding his acceptance of the gift which M. de Broc had so opportunely offered. While absorbed in prayer before

her image, the clear and irresistible conviction that the house in the town was not the place destined for his penitents pressed itself upon him. Accordingly, when the generous donor came to him with the key in his hand, and informed him that the house was ready for his occupation, he was surprised to be told by his friend that he must refuse his gift; that the blessed Virgin had communicated to him that she had other designs in his regard; that the situation was too near the city for its purpose, and that before long she would provide him with a more suitable 'refuge.' At the same time she warned him not to solicit pecuniary assistance from anyone, and not to receive any payment for his orphans or penitents; that those who could afford to pay should go elsewhere.

Having great faith in his 'Mother,' he patiently awaited the fulfilment of her promise. While in this state of expectancy, he one day visited an old invalid gentleman, living at a few miles' distance from Bayonne; his countenance betraying the heavy care by which he was occupied, his host asked him what was the matter. The whole story came out; whereupon the old gentleman informed him that there was a farm in the neighbourhood which no one seemed inclined to purchase or hire, and which might be had almost for a mere nothing. He added: 'It is clear to me that the promised opportunity has presented itself; come with me and buy the farm at Anglet.' This farm was situated on the summit of a bleak hill, close to a gloomy pine wood, in the centre of a barren sandy waste. It seemed, however, to possess all that he required for his purpose; but the 'mere nothing' was forty thousand francs, and he had not a centime in his coffers. He hesitated, but did not venture to make a bid; and, wishing his friend good morning, he turned away, without any expectation of ever becoming the purchaser.

His friend, however, insisted upon his returning upon a second occasion to look over the place, and, although he had not walked for several months, went with him to

Anglet on foot. They strolled through the apartments, the abbé taking little notice of anything until his eye fell upon the picture of Mary Magdalen, the patroness of fallen women who have become penitent. In this incident he recognised an indication that Anglet was the place predestined for his labours, and he decided upon buying the house and farm, and engaged to sign the contract on the following Saturday. This picture of Magdalen is still to be seen in one of the rooms of the Refuge. This occurred upon a Tuesday, and he had not the slightest idea how or where the purchase-money was to be procured for the end of the week. No sooner had he fixed the day for completing the affair than he began to hesitate and doubt, until an interior sentiment seemed to reprimand his want of confidence, and his courage returned. On seeking out his solicitor at Bayonne, he found him seriously ill, and unable to receive him; but he sent him word that he would be quite recovered before Saturday, when his services were required to perfect the sale. The notary, contrary to expectation, recovered; the contract was executed, and the purchase-money flowed in abundantly.

One of the rules laid down to test his perfect confidence in the assistance of our Lady, as we have seen, was that he should not ask for pecuniary aid. This was carried so far, that when he made a pilgrimage to Buglose, he hesitated to pray that the money so much needed might not fail; but ever from the hour when he concluded his purchase funds were forthcoming at the moment of necessity. He was once seized by a creditor as he descended from the altar, still robed in his vestments. While he was sorely puzzled where to procure the amount of this debt, three hundred francs were brought to him unexpectedly by a lady, who, knocking abruptly at the door of his confessional, said that she and her husband had promised to give five hundred francs for some charitable purpose if they obtained an especial grace for which they prayed; that that favour had been obtained, and that she desired

to give him the largest portion of her offering. Another time he was in great need of three thousand francs. He knew an old lady at Biarritz, very rich and very charitable, and at that time on her death-bed, and forgetting his prohibition to solicit, he resolved to write to her, and beg for the sum required. He wrote three letters, one after another, and each time found that what he had written was nonsense. Then he remembered the injunction, and gave up his idea of asking for the money. A fortnight later the lady died. Before her death she assembled her relations, and told them what she possessed, that she had not specified any particular direction, as she knew that they would make a good use of the inheritance. One thing alone, she said, she wished to mention—her desire that, after her decease, three thousand francs might be sent secretly to the Abbé Céstac.

Previous to the foundation of his orphanage the 'good father' had projected a congregation of women for active duty, to be called 'Les Servantes de Marie;' their principal occupation was to be the education of the poor in rural districts and the cultivation of the land. These, with his penitents and orphans, he installed in his farm at Anglet, and called it the 'REFUGE.' This congregation now numbers more than four hundred nuns, besides whom there is an average of sixty orphans and one hundred and fifty penitents. They derive their support from the produce of their farm and needles. The penitents are separated from the orphans, and are lodged in a commodious house at the western extremity of the farm. The sisters labour in the fields, follow the plough, feed and litter the oxen, milk the cows, of which they possess over a hundred, exclusive of six yoke of oxen, and make the butter, which they sell to their customers in Biarritz and Bayonne. They conduct and drive the carts, and a most interesting thing it is to see the docile oxen, which in this country generally take the place of the horse, conducted along the road by one of these sisters, in her blue habit, with the usual long guiding-pole in her hand. During the construction of the various buildings which

constitute this large establishment, the sisters laboured with their own hands, attending the masons and making all the fences. They even made the mortar, animated by the example of 'le bon père,' as they habitually designated him, and who used to show them his own hands, hard and blistered as those of an Irish hodman.

Besides the oxen they possess five pair of farm-horses and nine donkeys of the large Spanish race. They are celebrated for their breed of pigs, and they average a yearly produce of four hundred *bonhams** ('pourceaux'). The collection of rabbits is very large and very curious, and they abound in fowl of all descriptions. The extent of the farm is one hundred and fifty hectares, or about four hundred acres, of pasturage, with about five hundred acres of arable land, and it sustains a population of seven hundred persons.

Nor is their labour confined to the culture of the fields and the garden. A large number are employed in needlework, in which they are assisted by the orphans, while in their agricultural labours they are aided by the penitents. They make a peculiar kind of embroidery, which is remarkable for its fineness and exquisite finish, and is sold at the convent. They continually receive orders from Paris and other parts of France, from public establishments as well as from private individuals. The Empress has shown peculiar interest in their prosperity, as might be expected from her fervent spirit of piety and from her occasional residence at Biarritz. It was by this community that the linen for her own *trousseau* and for the *layette* of the Prince Imperial was furnished.

In addition to these occupations, they instruct the orphans, giving them an education suited to their sphere of life; they bring them up to be good practical servants, and they never fail, at the proper age, to find situations for them according to their capacities and acquirements. Furthermore, these sisters superintend the poor schools throughout the district of Bayonne; they attend the sick

* An Irish name for young pigs.

as nurses, are as ready to give their services to the Protestant or the Jew as to the Catholic, and are as much sought for in this capacity by the former as by the latter.

Although so many 'penitents,' some of them rude and wayward beings, are supported at the Refuge, there is no walled enclosure, nor bar, nor bolt. Upon a late occasion, an eminent ecclesiastic, at the head of a house of refuge in the north of France, visited this establishment, and expressed his surprise at the absence of any enclosure or similar means of detention. He asked 'le bon père' how he expected to retain his erring daughters if the recollection of the world should tempt them to wander back. His simple reply was, 'Oh! our blessed Lady will keep them for me!' It is remarkable that during the space of thirty years the instances of relapse or withdrawal from the Refuge have been extremely few; whereas, as one of the excellent priests who directs them observed to me, it is probable that many would become discontented and return to the world and its ways if a wall were to be built around, and it was intimated to them that they should not stir outside it. The understood rule is that they are at full liberty to go out and away if they please, but that if once they go back to the world they will not be received again at the Refuge as 'penitents.' Wise confidence, constant work and prayer, have been the instruments of success, under the protection of our Lady, in the hands of the Abbé Céstac.

How far these two great virtues, labour and prayer, can be combined, there is living evidence in the seclusion of the BERNARDINES, whose retreat is in close proximity to the Refuge. Sitting, on the long winter evenings, in a comfortable arm-chair, with one's feet upon the fender, one may peruse with interest the lives of the hermits of the desert; one may doze over the account of St. Savin or St. Aventin; but it will scarcely occur to anyone, even in a dream, that self-denial and religious heroism equal to those of the early ascetics are practised in these our

modern days. And yet such things exist in France for our edification and example. Beyond the sunny pastures of the Refuge a sandy path conducts into the sombre depths of a dark pine wood, where a timber palisade encloses two lines of low cells, terminated by a chapel and a cemetery. Within this narrow space may be found, in the continued practice of prayer and penance, a community that aspires to the highest degrees of perfection—predestined souls, whom the world or the children of the world cannot comprehend.

In 1842, Sister Madeleine, animated by such aspirations, obtained permission from her brother to retire with a few sisters into solitude, and there practise the rigid rule of St. Bernard. Complete isolation, absolute silence, total abstinence from flesh meat, manual labour in the garden and the graveyard, constant prayer in the church, or meditation in their cells, constitute their rule of life. Like the Trappists, their bed is a hard board, to which they retire at eight in the evening to rise at four in the morning. On Friday they take the meal which serves for dinner—unseasoned vegetables—on their knees. They dwell in narrow cells, with space merely for their bed and a small table and chair; they wear no stockings; a round cowl, attached to a long robe of coarse white wool, conceals their features; a large black cross on the back of their habit impressively proclaims that their hearts' desire is, like the Cyrenean, to share the burden of their divine Master. They never read a book, except one of devotion, and are entirely ignorant of the politics and changes of society. This holy Thebaid is shut out from all view of the external world; neither ocean nor river, nor plain nor hill, can be discerned from it, although Nature, immediately outside its limits, presents herself in her loveliest aspects of sea and mountain. Unbroken silence and solitude prevail, and the stranger who enters its sacred seclusion becomes involuntarily overpowered by the sentiment that pervades the atmosphere and fills the mind with awe and wonder.

'They labour that they may subdue the body,' writes Dr. Ozanam in the 'Correspondant;' 'they pray that souls may be saved. Mediating between heaven and earth, who can know what graces they have obtained for France? When the people of Israel were fighting to gain the promised land, Moses, their leader and guide, lifted up his hands to heaven, and prayed on a high mountain. When, overcome by fatigue, he lowered them, the enemy conquered, but when he raised them up again, Israel regained the advantage. In the same manner these unknown and obscure women, whom the selfish world despises, saying, "Of what use are they?" these grey veiled sisters lift up their arms to God, and for their sake God pardons and blesses the world.'*

When first Sister Madeleine and her followers established themselves in the desert, they erected a row of huts constructed of reeds, and having no floor but the sand. Each hut was about seven feet high and as many long, with space barely sufficient for a bed and stool, the light being admitted through the door. Their bed was formed of branches and dried leaves, covered by a coarse quilt, with a hard pillow, while their feet rested upon the sand. The chapel also was built of mud, thatched with reeds, and floored with sand. This was their state in 1853, when Dr. Ozanam first visited them; but the inmates suffered so much from rheumatic and chest complaints, that they were obliged to replace these rickety dwellings by huts or cells built of brick, and having wooden floors. The refectory is an exception, as its floor is still of sand. One of the original huts has been preserved, and is shown to visitors, that they may form an adequate idea of their primitive abodes.

* 'Elles travaillent pour dompter le corps; elles prient pour sauver des âmes. Intermédiaires entre le ciel et la terre, qui peut savoir combien de grâces elles ont obtenues pour la France? Lorsque le peuple d'Israël combattait pour entrer dans la terre promise, Moïse, son chef et son guide, priait sur une haute montagne, tenant ses mains tendues vers le ciel. Quand, vaincu par la fatigue, il les baissait, l'ennemi était vainqueur; quand il les relevait, Israël reprenait l'avantage. De même, ces femmes obscures et inconnues, que le monde égoïste méprise en disant: "A quoi me servent-elles?" ces sœurs grises et voilées tendent les bras vers Dieu, et par elles Dieu pardonne au monde et le bénit.'—*Correspondant*, 1858.

The original chapel also is preserved, and Mass is sometimes celebrated in it. One might imagine oneself in some wigwam church of Las Casas, among the primeval forests of South America.*

The new church, light and graceful, occupies a space at the eastern extremity of the huts, near the cemetery. Over the high altar is placed a statue of the blessed Virgin, to which considerable veneration is attached. It is a very touching image of our Lady of Dolours, to whom the church is dedicated. A curious story is told about this statue. Some fifteen years ago, a nun, who had been Superior of a convent in Spain, was expelled from that country, as so many religious constantly have been. She came to Biarritz to spend a few days in retreat at the Refuge. She was so pleased with all she saw that she said to the abbé on leaving, 'I will send you a statue of the blessed Virgin.' Some time after there arrived a large case, containing a beautiful statue. The abbé naturally was anxious to thank the nun who had sent him the statue; but he knew only her name in religion, and did not know from what province in Spain she had come.

About that time Abbé Céstac went to Madrid to found a house of the Servantes de Marie. In one of his drives about the city he came upon a large building which was new to him, and he asked the driver what it was, who named a convent of the order to which the nun who gave him the statue belonged. He got out, and asked if he could see the Superior. After some little time he was admitted, and at once entered on the subject, and asked the Superior if she could tell him where the nun who had visited the Refuge now was, and he told her the story of the statue. The Superior looked at him with so much astonishment and curiosity, that he said, 'But, reverend Mother, why do you look at me so?' 'So it is you who have our statue—our beloved statue?' she replied, and then told him that one day this nun, who was the Mother-

* A photograph of this chapel, 'La Chapelle de Paille,' adorns the title-page.

General, came to her in haste, and said, "Dear Mother, I have come to ask a great sacrifice of you. I want you to give me your statue of our Lady of the Seven Dolours, which I wish to send to some other place." Of course we consented, and gave it; but it was the greatest sacrifice she could have asked of us. That statue was our delight; in all our troubles we fled to it, and now you have got it.'*

It is believed that any request made with proper dispositions at the foot of this statue will be granted. When the Empress Eugénie first visited the Bernardines, and was about to enter the church to pay her devotion, the Abbé Céstac addressed her and said: 'Madam, pray for whatever you most desire, and I guarantee to you, through the intercession of our Lady of Dolours, that your petition will not be refused.' Having remained some time absorbed in profound prayer, she retired, when the abbé ventured to say: 'Well, Madam, your earnest wish and prayers have been granted.' At the end of the due time the Prince Imperial was born. I had this anecdote from the lips of the Abbé Céstac himself. Does it not recall to recollection the incident which is recorded of the visit of the Queen Hortense to Poëylahun, and of the birth of the Emperor Louis Napoleon?

The circumstance that first suggested the idea of establishing the Bernardines is very interesting. It is narrated in an extract from a letter, which was placed at the disposal of the accomplished writer of a graceful and attractive article, 'Life in the Landes,' which appeared in the 'Month' two years ago. I had neither seen nor known of this article when I wrote my description of the Refuge, published in the 'Tablet' of April 11, 1868.

'One day, in winter, some of the penitents were gathering sticks blown over the sand from a neighbouring pine wood, and also brought by the sea, when they heard some one moaning. They followed the sound, and found in a miserable cottage a poor old man very ill, and they im-

* The *Month*, No. 38, note, p. 122

mediately returned home and told the Servantes de Marie about him. Some of them went to see him, and took charge of him, nursing him and bringing him food. One day the old man said to the sister who came to see him: "My good sister, would it not be much better for me, and also save you a great deal of trouble, if you would take me to your own home, instead of your coming backwards and forwards every day?" The sister repeated the old man's words to the "bon père," and he said, "Bien, qu'il vienne." And so he was brought and taken care of. After some little time, the old man said, "Now you have taken such care of me, I am very comfortable and very grateful. But you see I have a garden, in which I grow a number of things; but I have not been able to cultivate it this year, and, if nothing is put in it, nothing can be reaped. Could you not cultivate my garden?" So the sister went to the "bon père" and told him the poor man's request, and again he said, "Bien, cultivez son jardin." So several penitents were sent to cultivate the little garden in the sandy desert. While there, they were so struck with the utter silence and loneliness of the place, that they resolved to adopt that same spirit, and work in perfect silence, raising their hearts to God, and communing only with Him. They felt so happy that they wished never to abandon this life; but the Servante de Marie, who had charge of them, said, "Dear children, this is very delightful; but remember that we are not acting under obedience, we must ask our bon père's permission." They told the abbé what they had been doing, and how happy they felt in that solitude and silence. He was very much struck by their account, and gave them leave to live in their own way, and to construct themselves huts of straw and wood for each one to live by herself. He ordered them, however, to speak to each other on Sundays, thinking that the perpetual silence might be too great a strain upon them. So for some time they went on speaking on Sundays; but they then came to the abbé, and implored him to let their silence be perpetual, except at confession, when reciting their office, and when spoken

to by a Servante de Marie. And so it is now going on. We were there the other morning before eight o'clock; the only sounds to be heard were the rolling and splashing of the waves and the singing of the nightingales.'*

Sister Madeleine died in 1849, in the very odour of sanctity. Her remains repose close to the entrance to the cemetery, under a lattice of roses and flowering shrubs. A cross marks the spot, which is further recognisable by the inscription,

À NOTRE MÈRE.

She was the first who showed her daughters the way into the desert, and so she was the first to receive the crown and the reward. The perfume of the flowers which wreath her grave is but a feeble semblance of that sweet odour of virtue and grace with which her life was redolent.

Thus, under the direction of the Abbé Céstac, did the mortified Bernardines and the laborious Servantes de Marie combine the two perfections of work and prayer, of busy life and contemplative solitude. It would be curious to narrate the impressions which I have seen produced by a visit to the Bernardines on our non-Catholic countrywomen. They so little comprehend personal penance or vicarious expiation, in union though it always is with that great Atonement which has been offered up once for all, that their minds become confused at the spectacle of unceasing silence and mortification. I have known them to shed tears in the pagan tenderness of their hearts, and become nervously excited on seeing these hooded recluses and their penitential garb; while they rarely could comprehend how much happier they are in their contemplative silence and uninterrupted communings with their heavenly Spouse than any of these 'foolish virgins,' who waste on them their commiseration, can ever be in their gayest distractions or giddiest revels. May not this instruction by example have been one of the mysterious designs for which Providence inspired the 'bon père' to

* The *Month*, August 1867, p. 122.

refuse the house at Bayonne and purchase the farm at Anglet?

I now have told my readers all that I have seen and learned of this most interesting community. It may be that it does not properly constitute one of the Sanctuaries of the Pyrenees, but, situated on the outskirts of the Landes, within view of the Pyrenean range, and illustrating the ancient spirit of asceticism and the modern spirit of labour and instruction, I hope it may be conceded to me that I have done well in selecting it as the last shrine of my pilgrimages. The founder of the Refuge will take his place for all time at the side of St. Vincent of Paul, the Abbé de Rancy of La Trappe, and the other great apostles of Catholic institutions. I trust that I have enabled my readers to form to themselves the portrait of the 'excellent priest,' as the Bishop of Bayonne frequently designated him in his funeral oration, who founded in the face of innumerable difficulties, and governed with inexhaustible charity and zeal, this remarkable establishment. It is not necessary to tell them how he was loved and venerated; 'le bon père,' the title by which he always was called, expresses in three short words the *résumé* of what I have written in many.

There was one feature in the perfect character of this holy priest that I must not omit to particularise—that was his great tolerance for the opinions and religious belief of others. He was especially kind and considerate towards English Protestants. At various times, attracted by his simplicity, earnestness, and gentleness, several have introduced themselves to him, and, placing themselves under his instruction, have been brought back to the fold; many of these still live to extol his virtues and bless his memory. He was known to possess power over evil spirits, who exercise dominion, even at the present day, to an extent which might surprise and alarm unwilling scepticism. I will give an example, which has been told to me by high authority since his death.

It happened that a young lady of a good family in the

neighbourhood of Bayonne asserted that she had constant visits from the blessed Virgin; but her conduct and language became so extraordinary and unbecoming as to cause serious uneasiness to her parents. They persuaded her to make a retreat at the Refuge, and place herself under the spiritual direction of the Abbé Céstac. A couple of days elapsed, when she said to the nun who was in attendance on her, 'The blessed Virgin appeared to me last night, and said that she was much pleased with the Father Superior, and bade me tell him so.' On hearing this, the Superior reflected for a little, and said, 'What you tell me is enough to show me the nature of these visions. The blessed Virgin would never desire to cause vanity in any one, and could not have sent a message that might have excited mine: watch her closely.' Soon after this the same nun went to him again, and said that Mdlle. X—— had repeated that 'the blessed Virgin had visited her; that she again had ordered her to tell the "bon père" that she was much pleased with him, but that his system needed numerous reforms, and that she had been commissioned to undertake them.'

In the afternoon of the day on which he had received this self-sufficient message, Abbé Céstac was sitting at the bedside of a sick nun, with whom he had some conversation on the subject of Mdlle. X——. He sent for her, and desired her to bring him a book from his library, without telling her the name or subject of the work. It was a treatise by Benedict XIV. on true and false visions, and was placed in a back row of the shelf, behind some other books. She had never been in the library; but when she entered it, she walked straight up to the place where the book was, removed those before it, and brought it down. The abbé desired her to open and read; she opened it at the passage that he intended, and began to read upon the delusions of the demon through means of false visions. The abbé took out his watch to see the hour, when, instead of reading, Mdlle. X—— gave an unearthly shriek and fell down at his feet, pale and quivering; the watch, which

he held in his hand, was wrenched violently from it, the case flung to one side of the room, and the works to the other side. This was witnessed by the sick nun and her attendant, as well as by the abbé. The attendant went to pick up the watch and the scattered works, but, when she handed the watch to the abbé, great was his astonishment to find it perfect and uninjured. The young lady withdrew, humbled and stupefied, and never more was known to imagine visions. She left the Refuge completely cured, having been dispossessed of the unclean spirit which had entered into her, and thenceforward edified her family as much as she previously had disconcerted them.

Early in the year 1868, Abbé Céstac told his friends that his labours were drawing to an end, and that he would not live more than two months. This he repeated so frequently, and with an expression of so much certainty, that the community began to feel alarm, notwithstanding his general healthiness and activity. He was particularly bright and pleasant with his brother priests at dinner on Friday, March 27, and retired to bed at his usual hour, apparently in perfect health. Not more than a couple of hours had elapsed, when some of the sisters who occupied the room underneath his were roused by knocking on the floor above. They were soon in attendance; they found the 'good father' ailing, and he immediately said to them, 'C'est fini de moi!' He complained of oppression on his chest, and desired that his confessor, Abbé Duclos, should be summoned. He had baptised the Abbé Duclos, who now was called to administer to him the last sacraments. Blessed coincidence of religious ministration at the cradle and the grave!

It did not seem to his confessor that danger was imminent, but, being urged by the infirmarian, whose practised eye more quickly detected the change, he heard his confession, administered Extreme Unction, and gave him the indulgenced benediction, 'in articulo mortis.' This being done, the dying priest exclaimed fervently, 'Ma Mère, je vous donne tout; je m'abandonne à vous!' These

were his last words, and he quietly turned his head on the pillow. His confessor and the infirmarian continued to rub his hands; they grew cold. There was no convulsion, no spasm, no rattle, but his loving, yearning, glowing soul had gone to God! leaving his bewildered sisterhood in that confused affliction which such a bereavement produces, even when relieved by the consolation that a life like his can furnish. 'I have seen,' said the Abbé Duclos to me, 'more than two hundred of our sisters die since I have been here, many of them with marks of assured predestination; but I never have seen a death like his, such a passing away from life without perceptible sign, change, or struggle.'

On the 28th and 29th his remains were exposed to the veneration of the faithful; he was clothed in his vestments —the purple colour of the penitential season—and a few wax-candles burned on a table near his head. More than six thousand persons visited the body during the two days on which it lay in a narrow room, decorated with laurel crowns, and watched by the widowed sisters, whose suppressed sorrow was more touching than the louder accents of a purely mundane grief. The pressure for entrance to the chamber of death was extreme, but great forbearance was observed in the preservation of order and decorum. It recalled to my mind the death and obsequies of another great priest and servant of God, the Abbé Desgenettes, the well-known Curé of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, which I had witnessed in Paris many years before.

His obsequies took place at 10 A.M. on Monday, March 30, in the chapel of the Refuge, where he had said Mass for the last time on the preceding Friday. An eloquent funeral oration was preached, which drew tears from almost every eye; the chapel was crowded to inconvenience, and, being huddled among a crowd, it was not possible for me to catch the whole of the discourse. I never witnessed a scene of greater personal sorrow at the funeral of one who had no family nor kindred to lament

his loss except his brethren in Christ Jesus. The effect of the usual accessories of a grand funeral service was enhanced by the presence of the entire body of the Servants of Mary and their cowled and silent sisters the Bernardines. The venerable Bishop of Bayonne was there, and seemed deeply to share the general affliction. When the high Mass and long office of the dead were finished, the coffin was conveyed from the chapel to the garden, followed processionally by all the gentry of the vicinity, the civil authorities of Bayonne, and the commandant of the citadel, who attended as representative of the Emperor.

The community had obtained permission from the bishop to have the body interred in their garden rather than in the cemetery of the Bernardines, who, as guardians of the grave of his saintly sister, considered themselves entitled to its possession. When I entered the garden, in the train of the funeral *cortége*, the spectacle which it presented was most solemn and imposing. The entire community was grouped on their knees along the various walks and parterres, so as to form a battalion of mourners in front and around the place of sepulture. The crowd that followed ranged themselves, of their own accord, in that excellent order which the French so well understand, along the lower part of the garden, and against the walls of the convent. There were the Bernardines, about fifty in number, in their coarse white habits and closed hoods, bowed down to the earth; there were the Servantes de Marie, in their neat blue robes and black veils, their countenances overflowing with sorrow; there was the long line of 'penitents,' in plain black dresses and black veils, deploring the loss of their friend and father; there were the orphans, in snowy white frocks and long white veils, with faces so youthful, so mild and blooming, that they alone seemed not to realise the import of that scene. And then came the long array of priests, his brethren and friends, slowly chanting the 'Dies Iræ;' and behind all was the vast gathering of the sympathising people. Over all this mingled

concourse the sun was blazing fiercely, as it does even in March in those southern skies, by its warmth and brightness giving animation even to the grave.

There was complete silence except when the funeral dirge rose sadly and solemnly,

> And priest and people joined in homage lowly.

As the coffin was lowered to a vault opened at foot of the Oratory of Our Lady, which stands under the western wall of the garden, the mournful solemnity of the moment was profound—a commingling of grief and thanksgiving, such as never can be effaced from the memory of those who witnessed it.

It recalled to my recollection the funeral of another devoted missioner, which I had attended in Ireland not many years ago, that of a Franciscan friar, Father Patrick, who had fallen a victim to fever in the discharge of his ministry at Killarney. The coffin was borne from the noble cathedral, one of Pugin's greatest works, through the streets of the town, on the shoulders of the people, followed by the gentry, traders, and artizans, in universal mourning for him who was a stranger among them, but whose name had been a household word in their homes. When deposited in the chancel of the unfinished church, which he had commenced to erect with no other funds than the people's pence and labour, the cries and wailings poured forth proclaimed how great was their attachment and sorrow. Here in France the popular grief was not less deep, but the expression of it was less vehement. Here men turned away in silent mourning, and thought long of what they had seen and lost. In Ireland they wept loudly, but soon dried up their tears. It is to be presumed that they too long remembered the lesson and the occasion. It is a beautiful thing to witness among both races, the Basque and the Celt, the sway which holiness and self-sacrifice exercise over the Catholic heart, and the honour that is paid in death to the martyr of charity and faith, surpassing all that worldly greatness or glory can command.

A singular incident was connected with the interment of the Abbé Céstac. It was found that the vault was too narrow for the coffin; and when the people had retired it became necessary to take it up and convey it back to the chapel. There it rested until the vault had been properly arranged; but none of the community was allowed to approach it. I was told this fact on my visit at the Refuge the day after the funeral. At that moment the bishop was engaged in prayer at the bier of his disinterred friend, and remained in that position for some hours. Who can tell the communications which passed in that unearthly colloquy?

On Wednesday, April 1, I attended at a solemn requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of 'le bon père,' in the grand old cathedral of Bayonne, in which he had commenced his ministry as curate. Monseigneur Lacroix, bishop of the diocese, ascended the pulpit and delivered the funeral oration. Occasionally the venerable preacher, himself of the age of seventy-four, became so much overpowered as to be unable to proceed without a long pause. He described the most remarkable characteristics of Abbé Céstac to have been his zeal for the salvation of the poor and his intense love for his neighbours, exhibited especially when in poverty or mental distress. The great wish of his life was that society should be rendered religiously 'solidaire,' all men united and dependent on each other in one great bond of Christian charity. The bishop dwelt lovingly upon his fervent piety, his spirit of self-sacrifice, his boundless acts of charity. He enumerated all that he had suffered in the progress of his undertakings, and he enlarged upon the especial interest he had manifested in orphan girls and repentant women. He stated that, notwithstanding the long period during which he had been in the management of so large an institution, and the amount of money that had passed through his hands, he died possessing nothing. In the words of his last testament, 'Il n'avait rien à lui.' The bishop concluded a most impressive discourse by expressing his conviction that his glorified spirit would continue always to bless and

direct not alone his bereaved sisterhood at the Refuge, but the city and entire diocese, of which he had been the honour and the pride. He called upon his hearers, although they must not doubt of his salvation ('ne doutons pas de son salut'), ever to remember him in their prayers and almsgiving.

A new church, such as the increase of the congregation at the Refuge requires, is to be built in the garden, and the high altar is to stand over the spot where repose the mortal remains of the good father ('le bon père') Louis Édouard Céstac. The following inscription has been placed over the tomb:—

A. N. D. N. St. Joseph et M.
ICI REPOSE
DANS LA PAIX DU SEIGNEUR
LE PIEUX ET VÉNÉRÉ FONDATEUR
DU REFUGE,
ET DE LA CONGRÉGATION DES SERVANTES DE MARIE,
LOUIS ÉDOUARD CÉSTAC,
PRÊTRE ET CHANOINE DE LA CATHÉDRALE;
BON PÈRE,
QUI A LAISSÉ UN HÉRITAGE À SA FAMILLE SPIRITUELLE,
AVEC UNE TENDRE DÉVOTION POUR NOTRE SEIGNEUR
JÉSUS-CHRIST
ET SA TRÈS-SAINTE MÈRE,
LES VERTUS CHRÉTIENNES ET RELIGIEUSES,
DONT IL FUT UN PARFAIT MODÈLE.
NÉ À BAYONNE LE 6 JANVIER 1801,
DÉCÉDÉ À N.-D. DU REFUGE À ANGLET, BASSES-PYRÉNÉES,
LE 27me MARS 1868.
J. M.

With the death of the Abbé Céstac a change was necessitated in the administration of the Refuge. It is contrary to the custom of Rome to allow a congregation of women to be governed by a male Superior; but in this instance an exception was made in his favour as founder and creator. 'Rome veut que les femmes se gouvernent par elles-mêmes. Le pauvre défunt étant créateur de cette œuvre, il la gouvernait sous le souffle d'en haut, comme il l'entendait. Mais aujourd'hui que la communauté est assise sur de bons fondements, elle n'a qu'à suivre l'im-

pulsion imprimée par son fondateur,' writes a correspondent to me; and accordingly a successor to Abbé Céstac has not been appointed. The Refuge has been placed under the direction of a female Superior, and the duties of the priests attached to the convent are confined to their spiritual functions of preaching and administering the sacraments. The community is now placed upon a solid foundation. It would be impious to doubt that it ever can cease to be guided by the spirit with which its great founder was inspired, and following the impulse given by him, it must long continue to reclaim the sinful, to educate the ignorant, to edify the visitor, and to glorify God.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF THE REFUGE.

'O good Mother, the best and most tender of mothers! your maternal heart is the only true refuge for innocent souls who fly from the perfidious seductions of the world; it is the blessed asylum of souls who, once swayed by tumultuous passions, had been led astray from the path of holiness, but who, recognising their misery, come to your feet to weep over their errors, and devoted henceforward to the lives of penitence and love, renew their life by repentance. And I also, O compassionate Mother, am I not your child? I come to you; deign to receive me in your maternal and merciful heart. You will protect me during all the days of my life, and most especially at the awful hour of death. Amen.' *

* Appendix P.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

'*He died at the age of eighty-five years.*' P. 31.

EPITAPH OF HUBERT CHARPENTIER.

Adjacet huic altari sacro
Qui super manum Domini cecidit,
Qui semper abscondi voluit,
HUBERTUS CARPENTARIUS,
Meldensis sacerdos, Sorbonæ socius,
Ubique, ex necessariâ dilectione officiosus hospes,
Nullibi ex voluntariâ paupertate peculiaris dominus,
Domus tamen duas ad Pyrenæos erexit,
Quæ suo vicissim institutore ægrè caruêrunt.
Timuit nempe Garaizonensi, cùm ditesceret,
Deinde Betharanensem pauperiorem ei prætulit,
Hanc posteà amplificatam reliquit.
Tandem sub illustrissimo archiepiscopo Parisiensi primo
Joanni-Francisco Gondio
Novum se dedit hujus loci cultorem:
Transtulit, quasi ex Judæis, Calvariæ locum
Et in eo crucem exaltavit,
Sapientem egit architectum
Qui in monte fundamenta posuit.
Christo confixus hic commori debuerat,
Sed nihil interfuit ubi decederet è vitâ;
Et in ipso votivæ solitudinis exilio
Ne relictum sibi voluit esse desiderium sui.
Lutetiæ obiit in presbyterio Sancti Joannis,
In ejus quem diù amaverat pastoris sinu,
In unius Dei conspectu quem semper coluerat,
Dignus plane immortali memoriâ
Qui nec vixit sibi, nec sibi inortuus est,
Qui quandiù servavit animam, collaboravit evangelio
Et quandò afflavit, oravit,
Annos natus 85, die 16 decembris 1650.

APPENDIX B.

'*preservation of her devout parishioners.*' P. 33.

'Au diocèse de Lescar il y a une Chappelle assez grande qu'on nomme Notre-Dame de Bétharram, laquelle aiant été ruinée au même tems que la précédente (Sarrancé), a été depuïs quelques années en çà réparée et remise sur pié en la façon que je diray. Monsieur Charpentier, prêtre séculier, homme d'une rare vertu, aiant appris par le rapport des voisins que la nuit on y voioit des lumières et même parfois on y entendoit des concerts harmonieux, résolut de rendre à la Reine du Ciel un service qu'il croioit lui devoir être agréable, faisant rebâtir sa Chappelle: Et ce que lui donna encore plus de courage d'exécuter la bonne volonté qu'il avoit, ce fut qu'au même tems on trouva auprès de la Chappelle parmy les ronces une Image de Notre-Dame, tenant son fils entre ses bras, qui étoit aussi belle et aussi entière, que si elle n'eût fait que sortir des mains de l'ouvrier. L'aiant fait mettre sur l'autel, la puissante Reine des cœurs émut tellement les peuples d'alentour, qu'on ne voioit que pèlerins arriver à cette Chappelle. Le roy, qui se trouva pour lors au Béarn, les reines et Monsieur père du roy y ont fait de grans présens, et plusieurs particuliers ont contribué à un très-beau logis, qu'on a fait pour les pèlerins. Et comme cette Chappelle est assise au pié d'une petite montagne qui a une grande ressemblance avecque celle du Calvaire, on y a dressé tout autour huit ermitages ou stations, où les pèlerins qui y arrivent vont faisant leurs dévotions, et au plus haut trois grandes croix, avec un monument qui représente celui du Sauveur. Je dois à Monsieur de la Vie, premier Président au Parlement de Pau, deux belles remarques sur ce lieu, que j'ay apprises de sa propre bouche. La première est qu'au pié de la Chappelle il passe un certain torrent qu'on nomme le Gave, lequel depuïs sa source jusqu'à ce qu'il entre dans la rivière de Ladour, qui sont pour le moins deux journées, est si rapide qu'on n'y a jamais pu naviguer: Mais dès qu'il approche de la Chappelle, et tout autant qu'elle dure avec ses entrées et sorties, elle va d'un cours fort doux et posé, comme s'arrêtant par honneur devant le lieu où la Reine du monde est adorée. L'autre est que la paroisse où elle est assise, que l'on nomme L'Estelle, a été l'unique qui s'est maintenuë en la Religion Catholique pendant tous les troubles et divisions du Béarn, nonobstant les perséquutions qu'ils ont souffertes en bon

nombre à cet effet l'espace de cinquante ans, et plus: la Sainte Vierge tenant la main à la conservation de ses dévots paroissiens.' —POIRÉ, *Traité de la triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, tome i. ch. xii. p. 277. (1630.)

APPENDIX C.

Prayer to our Lady of Bétharram. P. 45.

'Reine des Cieux, la force des faibles, la lumière des aveugles, l'appui et le soutien des âmes souffrantes, soyez, ô Mère, le rameau béni sous lequel nous abritons nos peines et nos misères.

'Vous qui ne méconnaissez jamais les prières de ceux qui s'adressent à vous avec confiance, pitié, pitié pour des pauvres infirmes! Voyez les plaies de nos âmes et de nos corps: que votre douce main vienne les panser, les guérir. Du moins, si Dieu nous veut avec vous sur le Calvaire, obtenez-nous, vous qui êtes toute-puissante auprès de Lui, les vertus nécessaires pour les supporter avec résignation, afin que purifiés de corps et d'esprit, nous parvenions au séjour des joies éternelles avec vous, ô Mère! Ainsi soit-il.'

APPENDIX D.

'*There will be found in the Appendix two documents*,' *&c.* P. 68.

'Un titre important, dont l'original en parchemin est conservé, commence ainsi:—"Le 13 février 1613, M. Pierre Geoffroy, chapelain de l'église et chapelle de Notre-Dame-de-Garaison, a dit et déclaré que, depuis qu'il a eu l'administration et surintendance de la chapelle, il a reconnu si ouvertement, par tant de miracles qui se font en icelle, combien Dieu avoit agréable de se servir de ce saint lieu et que sa glorieuse Mère y fût honorée, qu'il se tient obligé de contribuer en tout ce qui sera de son pouvoir à l'augmentation du culte et service divin de ladite chapelle et administration de l'honneur et gloire de Notre-Dame, patronne d'icelle, et que pour cet effet il a jugé être nécessaire établir à perpétuité, en ladite chapelle certain nombre de prêtres, capables et de bonne vie, qui y résident continuellement, pour y faire le service requis et y recevoir les personnes dévotes qui à toute

heure y abondent de toutes parts."'—*Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 228.

'J'ai parcouru avec émotion un *inventaire* dressé en 1635 *des hardes, papiers et autres choses appartenant à feu M. Pierre Geoffroy, vivant grand chapelain de Garaison.* La mémoire d'un homme de bien donne de l'intérêt à tout ce qui a pu lui appartenir dans son passage sur la terre. L'œuvre du saint prêtre devait subsister et s'étendre. D'après une ordonnance royale du 21 septembre 1617, Sa Majesté ayant été informée que la grande dévotion qu'il avait à la chapelle de Garaison, située au pied des Pyrénées, où se faisaient souvent des miracles, y attirait un grand concours de monde, tant du royaume que des pays étrangers, de tous les sexes et de toutes les conditions, que parmi lesquels se glissaient des voleurs, vagabonds, etc. Défense est faite de les loger sous peine de 500 livres d'amende, applicable la moitié à la chapelle, et l'autre moitié à un hôpital.'—*Pèlerinages des Pyrénées*, p. 232.

APPENDIX E.

'*The original of the foregoing will be found in the Appendix.*' P. 74.

'Je commenceray par Notre-Dame de Garazon, ou Guérison, qui est à six lieuës de Tarbes, chef de la Province de Bigorre, sur la frontière du Béarn, au diocèse d'Ausch. Il y a environ six-vingts ans que les premiers fondemens en furent jettez, et tient-on de père en fils, que l'occasion fut celle que je vay dire.* Une petite fillette de 12 ans, qui gardoit les brebis en une lande, au milieu de laquelle la Chappelle fut depuis bâtie, étoit assise près d'une fontaine, qui est aujourd'huy couverte d'une belle demie-voûte joignant le pié du grand autel, quand la Mère de Dieu luy apparut, et luy commanda de faire avertir par son père les Consuls du Mont-Léon, ville située à une lieuë de là, de bâtir une église à son honneur à l'endroit où elle luy parloit. La fille ne fut point si surprise qu'elle n'eût assez de courage pour luy dire que très-volontiers, pourvue qu'elle voulût garder son pain et son sac, tandis qu'elle iroit en diligence faire son message. La Mère de bonté aiant accepté la condition, elle s'en courut à son père, et le bon homme, non moins simple que sa fille, aiant creu d'abbord à ce qu'elle luy disoit, s'en alla faire la proposi-

* Petrus Geoffroy *in Inst. B. Virg. Garazoniæ.*

tion aux Consuls, qui du premier coup le renvoièrent bien loin. Sur ce rebut il eut son recours à sa fille, qui s'en étoit déjà retournée aux chams, et luy aiant raconté ce qui s'étoit passé, et la fille en aiant fait son rapport à la Mère de Dieu, elle fut derechef chargée de la même commission. Mais la petite ne s'empressa point tant à l'exéquuter qu'elle ne prit bien le loisir d'aller visiter son sac et son pain, pour en faire part à son père, qui luy en avoit demandé. Cependant le tout se gouvernoit par une très-particulière providence du Ciel, qui la vouloit faire témoin, et trompette tout ensemble de la merveille qui étoit arrivée. Car, au lieu d'une pièce de pain bis qu'elle avoit laissé, elle y rencontra un beau pain blanc, qu'elle porta à son père tout transportée d'aise, et le père droit aux Consuls, sans y avoir touché. Le bruit du miracle s'étant épandu par toute la ville, le Curé de Mont-Léon fit entendre aux Consuls le danger qu'il y auroit de refuser l'honneur et la faveur que la Reine du Ciel présentoit à leur ville. Ainsi, la résolution prise, il se transporta avec toute la ville pour arborer la Croix au lieu où la Mère de Dieu s'étoit montrée à la fille, où par la contribution des personnes dévotes, fut du commencement bâtie une petite Chappelle, et depuïs une fort belle Église. Les miracles, qui y furent faits, et qui du depuïs ont toujours continués, nommément és personnes malades ou autrement incommodées en leurs corps, furent tels et en si grand nombre, qu'ils luy donnèrent le nom de Notre-Dame de *Guérison*, qu'en langage corrompu ils appellent *Garazon*.' — POIRÉ, *La triple Couronne de la Sainte Vierge*, tome i. p. 279 (ed. 1630).

APPENDIX F.

'*this has never been moved an inch from its position.*' P. 97.

'La pierre, sur laquelle l'image fut trouvée, produit tous les jours les effets les plus surprenants. Des personnes, dignes de foi, m'ont assuré que des femmes, depuis quatre ou cinq jours dans les douleurs qui précèdent les couches, avoient été délivrées de leurs peines à l'instant même qu'elles avoient pris un peu de cette pierre avec quelque liqueur. Une particularité remarquable c'est, que pleins d'admiration pour ces vertus, tous les dévots qui vont la visiter ont beau la briser et l'emporter par fragments, comme des reliques, la pierre reste toujours aussi grande; et les terribles et fréquentes inondations qui ont emporté les rochers

les plus solides n'ont pu jamais l'ébranler dans sa base. A l'endroit où elle est placée, on a bâti une chapelle, appelée *Notre-Dame de la Pierre.* Elle est située tout le long de la pierre, sur le cours du Gave; et dans l'année 1651, on vit une inondation qui couvrit la chapelle, emporta les moulins et les maisons voisines, et laissa la chapelle dans le même état.'—PÈRE LASSALLE, *Origine de la dévotion de Notre-Dame de Sarrance.*

APPENDIX G.

Father Poiré's account of Sarrance. P. 115.

'Dans les montagnes du Béarn, au diocèse d'Oleron, ressort du Parlement de Navarre, non loin du Roiaume d'Aragon, il y a un lieu de dévotion qu'on appelle communément Notre-Dame de Sarrance, tenu par les Religieux de Prémontré. Il y a plus de quatre cents ans que ce lieu a été honoré d'abbord d'une infinité de personnes qui y accouroient de toutes parts. Et l'on y a veu arriver quantité de miracles, mêmes en la personne des Rois d'Aragon et de Navarre. Et ceux-cy s'y sont bien monstrez si affectionnez que d'y bâtir un logement où ils se peüssent retirer lors qu'ils y alloient en dévotion. Pour l'église de Notre-Dame, elle est située au pié d'une haute montagne, et environnée de plusieurs autres d'une hauteur si prodigieuse, que pour arriver jusqu'à cime de la plus basse il faut à tout le moins un jour. L'ancienne dévotion a été grandement amoindrie depuïs environ cinquante ans que la Reine Janne chasse la religion catholique du Béarn. Mais à présent elle commence à refleurir au moien du soin et du zèle de nôtre grand et invincible Loüis, lequel aiant porté dans ces quartiers-là ses armes victorieuses, y a rétably la piété qui en avoit été bannie.'

APPENDIX H.

'*to all those who have contributed to reopen the sanctuary of Poëy-la-hun.*' P. 157.

'Je m'empresse d'instruire sa Majesté que, conformément à ses désirs, il a été célébrée, avec toute la pompe que les localités ont pu nous permettre, une solennité dans l'église de Poëylahun le 5

mai du courant. Ce jour, qui devait être pour nous un jour de deuil, en nous rappelant le souvenir d'un prince destiné à être le successeur du grand Napoléon, est devenu un jour de joie et de réjouissance par la naissance *d'un nouveau prince, qui, conçu dans nos montagnes, et, si j'ose le dire, par la protection de la Vierge, a essuyé nos larmes, ranimé notre courage, et est devenu l'objet de nos espérances les plus flatteuses.* Dans un banquet civique, des toasts ont été portés à LL. MM. l'Empereur et l'Impératrice des Français, à LL. MM. le Roi et la Reine de Hollande, au *jeune prince*, à M. le préfet, à M. le sous-préfet, à M. le prieur et à tous ceux qui avaient contribué à l'ouverture du temple de Poëylahun.'

APPENDIX K.

Prayer to our Lady of Bourisp. P. 241.

'Maintenant que voilà terminée la tâche qui m'avait été confiée, je recours encore à vous, ô Mère de mon Dieu, et vous supplie, si mon intention vous a été agréable, de bénir ceux pour qui je vous implore; ceux qui m'ont appris à vous aimer; ceux que j'aime et ceux qui m'ont fait du mal ou que j'ai offensés; ceux qui liront ces quelques pages, que je dépose aux pieds de votre image vénérée comme un hommage public de mon amour; moi-même enfin qui ai été choisi, quoique indigne, pour faire connaître ce sanctuaire que vous aimez; et je vous dirai avec l'Église: "Nous vous saluons, ô notre Reine, Mère de miséricorde, notre consolation dans cette vie, et notre espoir pour la vie éternelle; pauvres fils d'Ève, nous crions vers vous du fond de notre exil; errants dans cette vallée de larmes, nos pleurs et nos soupirs vous appellent; ô notre avocate, abaissez sur nous vos miséricordieux regards, et quand notre dernière heure sera venue, présentez-nous au Sauveur Jésus, le fruit béni de vos entrailles glorieuses; ô clémente, ô bonne, ô douce Vierge Marie! Ainsi soit-il.'

APPENDIX L.

'*The detail of this important analysis will be found in the Appendix.*' P. 374.

'ANALYSE DE L'EAU DE LA GROTTE DE LOURDES.

Je soussigné, professeur de chimie à la Faculté des sciences de Toulouse, professeur de pharmacie et de toxicologie à l'école de médecine de la même ville, chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, certifie avoir analysé une eau provenant d'une source qui jaillit dans une Grotte aux environs de Lourdes et avoir obtenu les résultats suivants :

PROPRIÉTÉS PHYSIQUES ET ORGANOLEPTIQUES DE CETTE EAU.

Cette eau est limpide, incolore, inodore ; elle n'a pas de saveur prononcée. Sa densité est à peine supérieure à celle de l'eau distillée.

PROPRIÉTÉS CHIMIQUES.

L'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes se comporte comme il suit avec les réactifs :

Teinture de tournesol rougie.—Est ramenée au bleu.

Eau de chaux.—Le mélange devient laiteux ; un excès d'eau de la Grotte redissout le précipité qui s'était formé tout d'abord.

Eau de savon.—Est fortement troublée.

Chlorure de barium.—Pas d'action apparente.

Azotate d'argent.—Très-léger précipité blanc qui se dissout en partie dans l'acide azotique.

Oxalate d'ammoniaque.—Précipité blanc.

Ammoniaque.—Pas d'action sensible.

Soumise à l'action de la chaleur dans un ballon communiquant avec un appareil propre à recueillir les gaz, cette eau a laissé dégager un gaz, que la potasse absorbait en partie. La portion de gaz que la potasse avait refusé de dissoudre a été en partie absorbée par le phosphore ; enfin il est resté un résidu gazeux, jouissant de toutes les propriétés de l'azote.

En même temps qu'elle laissait dégager les gaz dont il vient d'être question, cette eau s'est légèrement troublée, et a abandonné un dépôt d'un blanc légèrement rougeâtre. Traité par

l'acide chlorhydrique, ce dépôt s'est dissous en produisant une vive effervescence. J'ai saturé la solution acide par un excès d'ammoniaque ; ce réactif a déterminé la précipitation de quelques flocons légers, de couleur rougeâtre, que j'ai isolés avec soin. Ces flocons ayant été lavés à l'eau distillée, je les ai traités par de la potasse caustique ; ce réactif ne leur a rien enlevé. J'ai lavé de nouveau ces flocons, et je les ai dissous dans l'acide chlorhydrique ; puis j'ai étendu d'eau la solution, et je l'ai soumise à l'action de quelques réactifs, dont je vais indiquer les effets :

Cyanure jaune de potassium et de fer.—Précipité bleu.
Ammoniaque.—Précipité brun rougeâtre.
Tannin.—Précipité noir.
Sulfocyanure de potassium.—Couleur rouge de sang.

La liqueur séparée du précipité floconneux, dont je viens de rapporter l'analyse, a fourni avec l'oxalate d'ammoniaque un abondant précipité blanc.

Ayant séparé ce précipité par le filtre, j'ai versé dans le liquide clair du phosphate d'ammoniaque ; ce réactif a déterminé la formation d'un nouveau précipité blanc.

J'ai fait évaporer à siccité cinq litres d'eau ; j'ai traité le résidu sec par une très-petite quantité d'eau distillée pour dissoudre les sels solubles. La solution ainsi obtenue ramenait fortement au bleu la teinture de tournesol rougie.

J'ai de nouveau fait évaporer à siccité la solution ainsi obtenue et j'ai versé sur le résidu de l'alcool que j'ai enflammé. La flamme de l'alcool a présenté une teinte jaune livide, pareille à celles que produisent les sels de soude. J'ai fait dissoudre de nouveau ce résidu dans quelques gouttes d'eau distillée, et j'ai mêlé la solution avec du chlorure de platine ; il s'est produit dans le mélange un très-léger précipité jaune serin. Ayant acidulé par l'acide chlorhydrique deux litres d'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes, je les a fait évaporer à siccité ; le résidu, repris par l'eau acidulée, ne s'est dissous qu'en partie. La partie insoluble a présenté tous les caractères de la silice.

J'ai soumis à l'évaporation dix litres d'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes, dans lesquels j'avais fait dissoudre auparavant du carbonate de potasse très-pur ; le résidu de l'évaporation a été épuisé par de l'alcool bouillant ; la solution alcoolique a été évaporée à siccité et le résidu chauffé au rouge sombre.

Le produit de cette opération a été dissous, après son refroidisse-

ment, dans quelques gouttes d'eau distillée, et mêlé avec un peu de colle d'amidon.

En traitant ce mélange avec précaution par de l'eau chlorée très-étendue, j'ai vu le liquide prendre une teinte bleue.

Soumise à la distillation, l'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes donne un produit distillé très-légèrement alcalin.

Il résulte des faits qui précèdent que l'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes tient en dissolution :

1° De l'oxygène ;

2° De l'azote ;

3° De l'acide carbonique ;

4° Des carbonates de chaux, de magnésie et une trace de carbonate de fer ;

5° Un carbonate ou un silicate alcalin, des chlorures de potassium et de sodium ;

6° Des traces de sulfates de potasse et de soude ;

7° Des traces d'ammoniaque ;

8° Des traces d'iode.

L'analyse quantitative de cette eau a été faite par les procédés ordinaires ; elle a donné les résultats suivants :

EAU, UN KILOGRAMME.

Acide carbonique	„	8 cc.
Oxygène	„	5 cc.
Azote	„	17 cc.
Ammoniaque	traces.	
Carbonate de chaux	0 gr.	096 millig.
Carbonate de magnésie	0	012
Carbonate de fer	traces.	
Carbonate de soude	id.	
Chlorure de sodium	0	008
Chlorure de potassium	traces.	
Silicate de soude et traces de silicate de potasse	0	018
Sulfate de potasse de soude	traces.	
Iode	id.	
Total	0 gr.	134 millig.

Il résulte de cette analyse que l'eau de la Grotte de Lourdes a une composition telle qu'on peut la considérer comme une eau potable, analogue à la plupart de celles que l'on rencontre sur les montagnes dont le sol est riche en calcaire.

Cette eau ne renferme aucune substance active capable de lui

donner des propriétés thérapeutiques marquées. Elle peut être bue sans inconvénient.

Toulouse, ce 7 août 1858.

FILHOL, signé.'

APPENDIX M.

Prayer to Saint Savin. P. 474.

'O vous! la gloire de l'Église, le père et le modèle admirable de nos ancêtres, bienheureux saint Savin, puissant protecteur, ange tutélaire de ces contrées qui furent le théâtre de vos sublimes vertus, vous apparteniez par votre naissance à un pays étranger, qui vous promettait les honneurs les plus séduisants; mais l'ordre de la Providence et votre grand amour de la solitude vous conduisirent dans notre vallée. N'oubliez pas ce peuple fidèle qui conserve toujours un pieux et reconnaissant souvenir de la préférence que vous avez accordée au pays qu'il habite. Défendez-nous contre tout événement malheureux. Intercédez pour nous auprès de Dieu, afin que cette foi que vous nous avez léguée devienne chaque jour plus vive et plus ardente; que la paix et la charité règnent à jamais sur cette terre sanctifiée par vos prières et arrosée par vos larmes. Faites éclater encore parmi nous cette merveilleuse puissance que Dieu vous avait donnée sur les démons; protégez-nous contre ces cruels ennemis de nos âmes. Écoutez toujours, ô grand saint, les vœux de tous ceux qui viennent se prosterner auprès de votre glorieux tombeau pour célébrer vos vertus et implorer votre protection si puissante!

'SAINT SAVIN, PRIEZ POUR NOUS!'

APPENDIX N.

'*every eye involuntarily turns towards it,*' *&c.* P. 571.

'La Vierge du Pilar éblouit par ses richesses; celle de Médous était célèbre par sa beauté plastique. Quant à Notre-Dame de Buglose, elle porte un cachet inimitable: c'est une éternelle jeunesse, une bonté ineffable, un heureux mélange de grâce et de majesté. La dévotion du Pilar est trop fameuse en Espagne, celle de Buglose est trop fréquentée par nos populations du

Midi, pour qu'il soit nécessaire d'en dire plus long; mais le monastère de Médous n'existe plus, et la statue qui en faisait le principal ornement ne serait aujourd'hui connue que de quelques amis des arts, si d'éminents écrivains ne l'avaient sauvée de l'oubli. "Cette statue, apportée, dit-on, d'Italie, présente des qualités du premier ordre et porte le cachet des maîtres italiens du 17e siècle. La divine pureté de la tête de la Vierge, la majesté de sa pose, l'ampleur des draperies indiquent un ciseau qui savait s'inspirer des dessins de Raphaël. Au milieu du profond dénouement de nos provinces Pyrénéennes, à l'endroit des œuvres artistiques de la Renaissance, on est heureux de retrouver, dans l'église d'un village, un marbre qui ne serait pas indigne de figurer dans une des belles basiliques de Rome" ("Voyage archéologique et historique de l'ancien comté de Bigorre," par M. Cénac-Moncaut, p. 100). Celui qui a présenté "Nouste-Dame de Buglose" au dernier concours de poésie néo-romane, ouvert à Béziers, a vu depuis peu de temps les trois madones dont il parle dans sa pièce: il peut donc les comparer, sans courir risque de confondre ses impressions et ses souvenirs. . . . . Toute notre légende est peinte sur les verrières de la chapelle. Deux vitraux représentent aussi ses plus illustres visiteurs, une reine d'Espagne et St. Vincent de Paul. On passe devant la brillante princesse; on s'arrête devant l'humble prêtre. Qui n'aimerait à le voir prier avec toute la ferveur d'un saint dans le sanctuaire où la Reine du Clergé lui fit connaître sans doute, dès ses plus jeunes années, sa sublime vocation? Ce sanctuaire est situé sur le territoire de l'ancienne paroisse de Poëy, aujourd'hui commune de St.-Vincent.'—*Notes to 'Nouste-Dame de Buglose,'* pp. 10, 18.

APPENDIX O.

Prayer to our Lady of Buglose. P. 588.

'O Notre-Dame de Buglose, comme j'aime à vous honorer dans ce sanctuaire que vous vous êtes choisi depuis tant de siècles! Je reconnais bien à ce choix la Mère de Dieu qui est né à Bethléem: comme lui vous aimez tout ce qui est humble et caché; vous régnez au plus haut des cieux et vous établissez votre trône dans une humble chapelle au milieu des sables du désert. C'est là que tant de générations ont reçu les merveilleux effets de votre

puissance et de votre bonté ; c'est là que vous avez accueilli saint Vincent de Paul aux jours de son enfance, et là encore est l'autel où, aux jours de son sacerdoce, il a offert le Saint Sacrifice ; c'est là que dans notre siècle encore vous avez reçu un autre apôtre, le premier évêque d'Alger, de si douce et si sainte mémoire. O Mère, vous les avez comblés l'un et l'autre de l'abondance de vos grâces, vous en avez fait des saints ; ayez aussi pitié de nous qui vous invoquons transportés en esprit dans ce béni sanctuaire, nous nous unissons à toutes les prières comme à tous les hommages que vous y ont offerts tant de générations venues s'agenouiller à vos pieds. Montrez-nous que vous êtes toujours notre Mère, soyez toujours Notre-Dame de Buglose, la toute-puissante, par la vertu de son intercession, et la toute-bonne, par la tendresse de son cœur maternel.'—HAMON, *curé de St.-Sulpice.*

APPENDIX P.

Prayer to our Lady of the Refuge. P. 617.

'O bonne Mère, la meilleure et la plus tendre des mères, votre cœur maternel est le vrai, l'unique refuge des âmes innocentes qui viennent à vous loin des perfides séductions du monde ; il est aussi l'asile mille-fois béni des âmes qui, livrées aux passions orageuses et emportées hors de la voie sainte, se reconnaissant, viennent à vos pieds pleurer leurs malheurs et retremper dans la pénitence leur vie, vouée désormais aux larmes du repentir et de l'amour. Et moi aussi, ô Mère compatissante, je suis votre enfant ; je viens à vous, daignez me recevoir dans ce cœur maternel et tout-miséricordieux ; vous m'y garderez tous les jours de ma vie, et surtout à l'heure si redoutable de la mort. Ainsi soit-il.'

NOTRE-DAME DE LA SOLITUDE.

'Heureuse et sainte solitude de saint Bernard, où la Mère des douleurs appelle des âmes chères à son cœur maternel pour devenir des victimes de pénitence et d'amour ! Oh ! que son origine est touchante ! Ces âmes fidèles élevèrent d'abord quelques cellules de paille, cellules bien-aimées, où, dans un silence

perpétuel et le cœur toujours élevé vers le ciel, elles vivaient dans le travail, la pénitence et la prière. Les sables eux-mêmes, muets et silencieux, semblent respecter le profond recueillement de la Bernardine et se trouver heureux de se féconder sous sa main. Alors encore, dans une chapelle de paille, le Dïeu du ciel et de la terre venait, comme autrefois dans l'étable de Béthléem, remplir de sa vie et de son amour ces âmes dont toutes les aspirations allaient droit à son cœur. La divïne Mère des douleurs a consolidé son œuvre en lui laissant toujours son esprit et sa vie.'

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